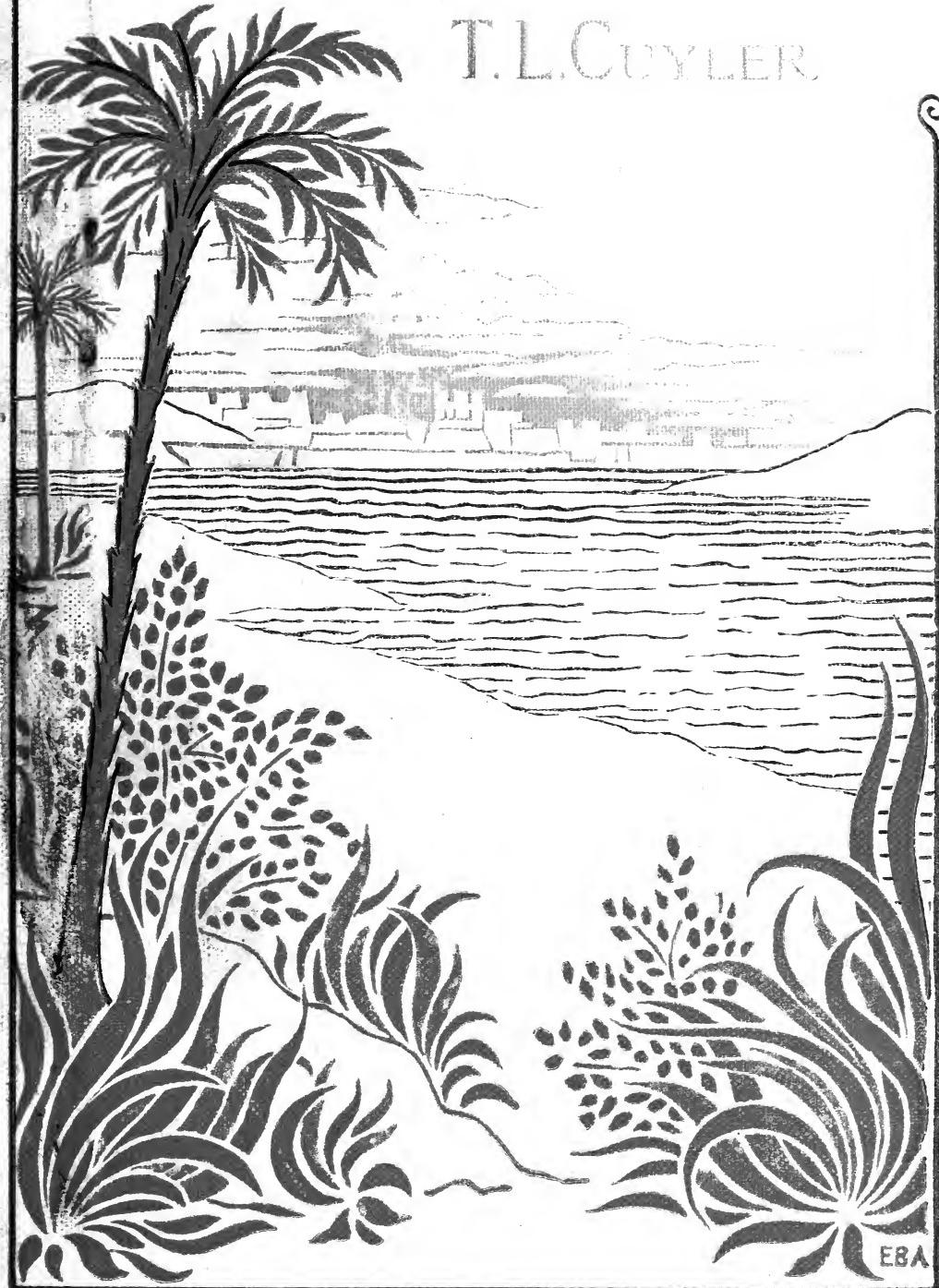


BEULAH-LAND

T.L.CUYLER.



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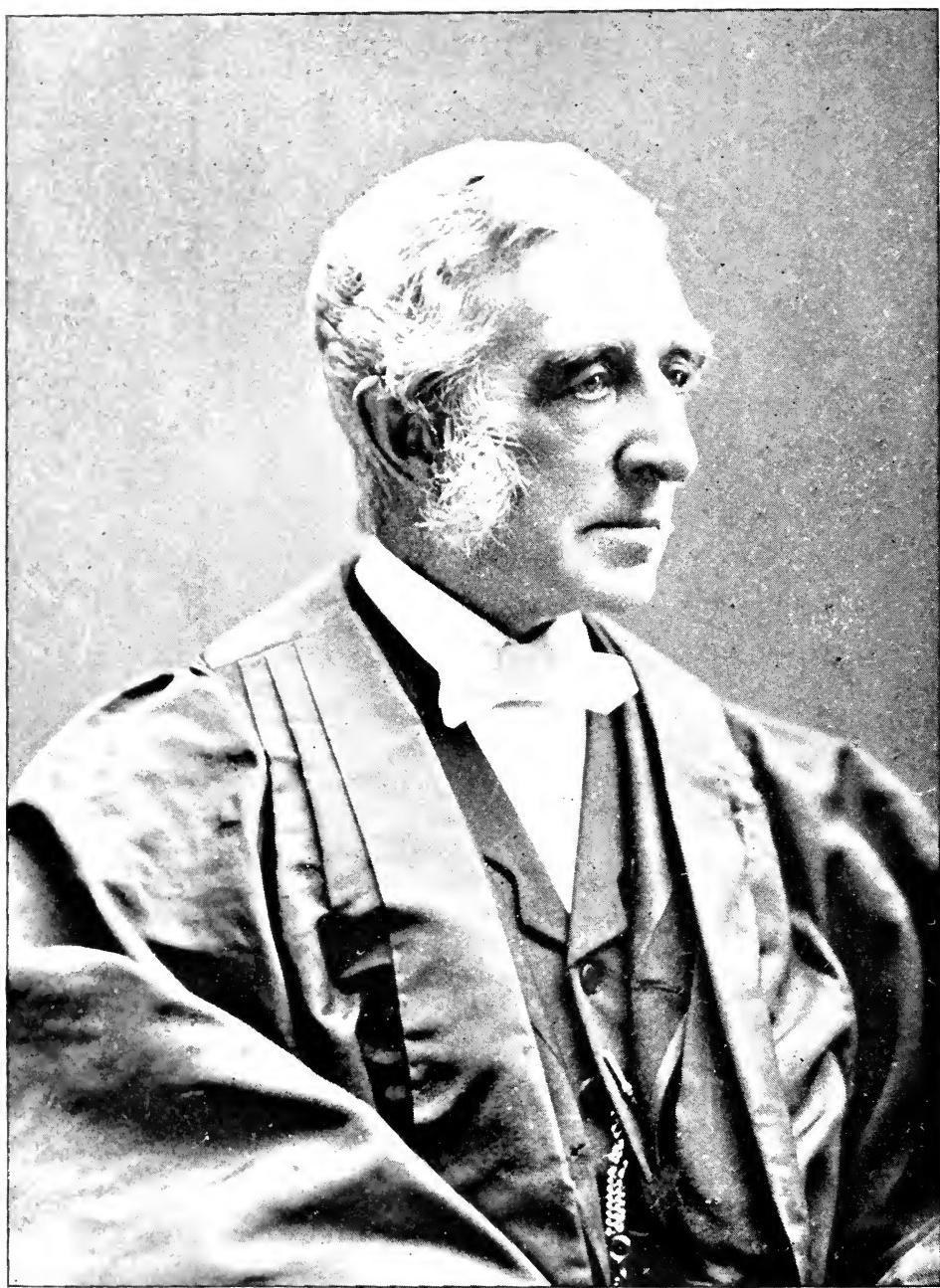
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BEULAH-LAND;

OR,

Words of Good Cheer to the Old.

BY

THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
10 EAST 23D STREET, NEW YORK.

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B E U L A H - L A N D .

I. THE LAND OF BEULAH.

THOSE who are familiar with John Bunyan's immortal allegory will remember how he brings his Pilgrims, in the closing days of their homeward journey, into the Land of Beulah. They had left far behind them the valley of the death-shadow and the horrible Doubting Castle in which Giant Despair imprisoned and tortured his hapless victims. In this delightful Beulah-land they found the atmosphere very sweet and balmy. They heard continually the singing of birds and saw an abundance of flowers blooming by the wayside. The sun shone by night as well as by day.

Glorious visions of heaven broke upon them; for they were in sight of the Celestial City, and in their walks they encountered several groups of the shining ones. Here they were not in want of the fruits of the field or the yield of the vintage, for the King fed them with an abundance of all the good things which they had sought for in all their pilgrimage. As they walked to and fro in this goodly land they had more rejoicing than when travelling in regions more remote from their Father's house. Beside their path were open gates inviting them into orchards and vineyards, and gardens filled with flowers and fruits delicious to their taste. In answer to their questions, the gardener informed Christian and Hopeful that these were the King's gardens, planted by him for his own delight as well as for the solace of the pilgrims. The gardener in-

vited them to make free of all the orchards and the vineyards, and bade them refresh themselves with the dainties. They were drawing near to the end of their long journey, and beyond the river that has no bridge was the New Jerusalem in all its flashing splendors. They were almost home!

Now it may seem at first sadly at variance with facts to compare the closing years of even the best Christian's life with that region of Beulah which Bunyan has pictured in such glowing colors. Is not old age commonly a period of declining bodily powers and sometimes of increasing mental decrepitude? Do not the ears often become deaf and the "keepers of the house tremble, and those that look out of the windows are darkened"? Does not even the grasshopper become a burden on shoulders that have become

weak and weary? All this is indeed true in regard to the physical infirmities that overtake many of Christ's faithful followers during the latter stages of their pilgrimage. A Christian has no immunity from disease, or poverty, or affliction, or bodily decline, or death. In these respects the same lot happeneth to all.

Yet there is another side to the picture. Old age is often a period of activity and of high spiritual joy, as well as of ripe experiences of that perfect love that casteth out all fear. It was "Paul the aged" who was rejoicing in the Lord always, and with many a scar on his back and many a dent on his shield went home to glory shouting! They that wait on the Lord renew their strength. Those who have dwelt in blessed communion with God for many a year, and have beheld as in a mirror the glory of their Lord, may find them-

selves changed more and more into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is my purpose to present in these following brief chapters some hearty words of cheer to such of my comrades as have heard the clock of time strike out its solemn threescore years and ten. There is nothing in that sound to frighten us, or to make our lips turn white or our knees to tremble. Rather should this voice out of the eternities quicken our zeal, and fire our ardor, and invigorate our faith, and make us as they whom when the Bridegroom cometh he shall find watching. I have some hope, therefore, that many a veteran servant of Jesus Christ, when he or she shall peruse these pages, may feel the soft breezes of Beulah-land fanning their cheeks, and the music of Beulah's singing-birds be heard as a sweet carol from the heavenly climes.

Quite too often is old age represented under the dreary similitude of winter, with its bitter biting winds whistling through leafless boughs, and its frozen clods ringing like iron beneath our feet. In our American climate there is a more genial season that bears the picturesque name of Indian Summer, when nature puts on a sweet smile before the wintry frosts set in, and the lingering foliage is clad in crimson and gold. A Christian life has its bright Indian Summer also. The harvest of good deeds—from good seed sown in early youth—is being garnered. Graces adorn the veteran believer and beautify him like the scarlet glories of an autumn forest. Like shocks of corn ripened in sunshine and shower are those servants and handmaids of the Lord who still “bring forth fruit in old age” that is savory to the taste. Whatsoever may be said of

the longevity of the mental powers, some of the most beautiful Christians I know of are in the genial Indian Summer of threescore and ten. Their orchards are still as fruitful as the orchards of Beulah, and yield their fruits every month. They are always abounding in the work of their Master.

On a bright July morning in my early youth I was privileged to take a walk with the venerable poet Wordsworth over the picturesque acres that lie around his cottage at Rydal Mount. The sunlight fell on his white locks, and the sunshine of peace fell on his tranquil spirit. Ripe in years, ripe in fame, and ripe in a Christian trust, he was spending his cheerful Indian Summer amid his lakes and his everlasting hills. The grand old poet was fond of repeating the following lines of Mrs. Barbauld, which he said were un-

surpassed by any in the English language :

“ Life ! we have been long together
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather ;
'T is hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 't will cost a sigh, a tear.

“ Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time ;
Say not good-night, but in some happier clime
Bid me good-morning !”

2. GOD'S VETERANS.

"THEY that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and green." So readeth the Revised Version. Young Christians are like an orchard in May; every blossom is full of promise. The same persons, after the sunshine and showers of forty or fifty years, become like an orchard in October, when the ripe apples are ready for the bin.

In this fast age there is a clamorous demand for young men, and sometimes a disposition to shelve those who are past threescore; but there are some men who will not be shelved, or, if they have

been, the public necessities take them down again, and demand their ripe judgment and experience. When a difficult case comes into court it is commonly a veteran lawyer that is called on to make the decisive argument; when the young physician is baffled by the novel disease the old doctor, who has hunted down every malady known to mortal flesh, is called into consultation. When the life of Germany was assailed by the legions of France three old heads were put together—Kaiser Wilhelm, Bismarck and von Moltke; they soon blew the invasion into fragments. The ancient parish of Franklin, Mass., was once disturbed by novelties that threatened its orthodoxy and its peace; the venerable Doctor Emmons, at the age of ninety, put on his cocked hat, and, marching into the meeting house, quelled the commotion in fif-

teen minutes, and scattered the fogs of heresy from the atmosphere. The most colossal character on the globe to-day will soon celebrate his eighty-seventh birthday; it was the lack of his magnificent leadership, more than anything else, that cost the British Liberal Party their recent rout. His white plume might have turned the battle.

For many of the achievements of life, youth and early manhood and womanhood are the most favorable; but for certain others the long experience, the compacted mental fiber and matured judgment of old age are the most serviceable endowment. Some people do not get their full growth until they have passed the meridian. A great deal of vicious nonsense has been written about "the dead line of fifty." The author of that preposterous phrase could never have heard that Milton

wrote the “Paradise Lost” and Benjamin Franklin began his philosophical studies when they had passed that “dead line.” Dr. Chalmers at sixty-three was the field-marshall of the glorious exodus of the Scottish Free Church; John Wesley at eighty-eight preached every day and still held the helm of Methodism; and Dr. Richard S. Storrs at seventy-five can outwork and outreach a legion of brilliant pulpiteers whose armor sparkles with the “dews of youth.”

My beloved British brother, Dr. Newman Hall, still finds his bow abiding in strength at fourscore; and a most vivacious letter from General Neal Dow, the father of “prohibition,” now lies before me, written at the completion of his ninety-second year! There is a vast difference between being old in years and being old in mental and spiritual force. Some young persons

have the weakness of senility, while many veterans have the fiber of life's morning far into its afternoon. The secret of keeping young is to keep at work and never allow the rust to collect on one's weapons. Worry corrodes, but steady mental work strengthens; especially when one obeys the simple laws of health which God has written on our bodies. Actual "retiring from business" is very apt to rust any man out speedily. If a man resigns his store, his shop, or his profession, let him lay hold of something else useful to his fellow men. The celebrated Dr. Archibald Alexander kept young by doing a certain amount of intellectual work every day, so that he should not lose his touch. He was as full of sap on the day before his death as he was when he mounted his horse and rode through Virginia on his missionary tours at the age of twenty-two.

He prepared, and often used, a prayer that was so beautiful that I quote a portion of it for my fellow-seniors on life's arena :

“ Oh, most merciful God, cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. May my hoary head be found in righteousness. Preserve my mind from dotage and imbecility, and my body from protracted disease and excruciating pain. Deliver me from despondency in my declining years, and enable me to bear with patience whatever may be thy holy will. I humbly ask that my reason may be continued to the last; and that I may be so comforted and supported that I may leave my testimony in favor of the reality of religion, and of thy faithfulness in fulfilling thy gracious promises. And when my spirit leaves this clay tenement, Lord Jesus, receive it! Send some of the blessed angels to convey my

inexperienced soul to the mansions which thy love has prepared ; and oh, may I have an abundant entrance ministered unto me into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This petition of the veteran servant of God was sweetly fulfilled ; and he fell gently asleep, to wake to the exceeding glory.

Mental vigor often continues through old age, and we know that the spiritual graces often grow in depth and vigor by the lapse of years. The Indian Summer of many a life is its most beautiful period. Its leaf, instead of withering, turns to bright scarlet and gold. Faith grows in its tenacity of fiber by the long-continued exercise of testing God and trusting his promises. A veteran Christian can turn over the leaves of his well-worn Bible and say, " This Book has been my daily companion. I know all about this

promise, and that one, and that other one, for I have tried them for myself. I have a great pile of checks which my heavenly Father has cashed with precious blessings." The Bible of my dear old mother was full of pencil marks set down alongside of the passages which had been her "rod and staff" through a pilgrimage of five-and-eighty years. As she drew near the end of her voyage the "land birds came out and lighted in the rigging," to show that the shining shore was not far ahead.

To those of my readers who have reached the threescore or the fourscore on the dial-plate, I would say that you ought to grow better as you grow older. Veteran soldiers become more expert in the selection and use of their weapons. In spiritual combats the Christian who has vanquished Apollyon often with the

sword of "all-prayer" is able to say, as David said to Abimelech, "there is none like that; give it to me." The testimonies of men and women who have known not only what but Whom they believed carry vast weight. I defy the conceited, scoffing skeptic to answer the experimental arguments of a humble needlewoman of my acquaintance who has known Jesus Christ intimately for fifty years. "Paul the aged" spoke with the authority of a long experience as well as with the higher authority of a divine inspiration.

"The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head." The silvery crown is often worn by those mountain peaks which tower highest toward heaven. As they who voyage toward the Spice Islands catch the fragrance when they approach the shores, so the voyagers to the Better

Country inhale sweet foretastes when they draw nearer home. Bunyan locates a Christian old age in the land of Beulah, in full bright prospect of the Celestial City, where the singing of birds was heard, and the sun shone night and day.

Fellow-pilgrims, be of good cheer! Make happy inventory of your mercies, and never give way to peevish and querulous lamentations. Keep every window of your mind open to new ideas, and strive to keep step with the progress of truth and of our Master's glorious kingdom. While the love of Jesus flows like the vital sap into every limb and leaf of your nature, let your fruits of grace fall abundantly into the laps of your fellow-men. Every hour of life is precious; pray don't idle away the Saturday afternoon, when the Sabbath morning of glory may break so soon!

“ Eye hath not seen, tongue hath not told,
And ear hath not heard it sung,
How buoyant and fresh—though it seems
to grow old—
Is the heart forever young.

“ Forever young—though life's long age
Hath every nerve unstrung—
The happy heart is a heritage
That keeps an old man young !”

3. *LIGHT AT EVENING TIME.*

GOD's Word is an inexhaustible jewel-bed. What a gem of the first water is this beautiful text: "At evening time it shall be light!" Like a many-sided diamond, it flashes out as many truths as it has polished sides. As the diamond has the quality of glistening in dim and darksome places, so this passage shines brightly in seasons of trouble and despondency. Old people may well put on their spectacles of faith and see what a rare and precious verse it is. The people of God who are under a cloud may also find in it the foretoken of better things to come.

The passage gleams out from one of the olden Jewish prophets—from the prophe-

cies of Zachariah, of whom we know very little except that he flourished about the time of the return from Babylon, 520 years before Christ's advent. He is that cheerful seer who pictures the streets of Jerusalem as yet to be filled with old men leaning on their staffs and little boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. The text occurs at the close of a remarkable passage, which reads as follows in a close translation: "And it shall be in that day that there shall not be the light of the glittering orbs, but densely thick darkness. But there shall be one day (it is known to Jehovah) when it shall not be day and night; for at the evening time it shall be light."

Many Bible scholars count this passage to be clearly prophetic of the Millennium. Our good brothers of the literalistic school quote it as predicting Christ's personal reign, when his "feet shall again stand on

the mount of Olives." Into that controversy we shall not enter, being quite satisfied that, while of that day and hour knoweth no man, yet "it is known to Jehovah." The beautiful text is so rich in spiritual suggestions that we are quite satisfied to catch some gleamings of the diamond.

i. The very essence of hope is in this inspiring verse. Some of us may recall a weary climb from the Vale of Zermatt up the rough acclivities of the Riffelberg, amid chilling mists and swirling gusts of tempest. The icy vapors penetrated to the marrow of our bones. At the Riffel all was blinding fog. We pushed on and upward, until, as we stood upon the Gorner Grat, the mighty caravan of clouds moved off and left the "body of the heavens in its clearness." Yonder rose the Weisshorn, a pyramid of silver, and the peaks of Monte Rosa flashed in crimson

and gold. We had been suffocated in storm and fog all day; but at evening time it was light.

This has been the ten thousand times repeated experience of God's children. Gray-haired Jacob in his loneliness wails out, "Joseph is dead; Simeon is dead; now they take Benjamin also. All these things are against me." Presently the returning cavalcade arrives to tell him that Joseph is governor of Egypt, and that he is invited to come and spend his sunset of life in the best of the land that Pharaoh can offer. A long, troubled day has the patriarch weathered through: but at evening time it is light. It is a part of God's discipline with us to hide his throne in clouds and darkness. The office of faith is to hold fast to the fact that behind those clouds a loving Father dwells upon that throne. It is the office of hope

to look for the clearing of the clouds by and by. If we had no storms we should never appreciate the blue sky. The trial of the tempest is the preparation for the warm afterglow of sunshine. Blind unbelief is continually railing at God, charging him with cruelty and scouting the idea of a special providence of all-wise love. But faith whispers, "Think it not strange, or as though some strange thing happened unto thee. God seeth the end from the beginning. To the upright there ariseth light in darkness. All things work together for good to them that love him." Hope bids us push on and upward. Push upward, and you will

"Hear hope singing, sweetly singing,
Softly in an undertone,
Singing as if God had taught her
It is better further on."

Only keep pressing higher, and closer to

Jesus, instead of wandering downward into doubt and sullen despair.

The darkness may be thick about thee now, my brother; but the Christian life is a walk of faith. God never deceives his children. If we but keep fast hold of the Guiding Hand we shall find the road to be not one step longer or harder than is best for us. God has piloted every saint through this very road and up these very hills of difficulty. It will be better further on. Every chastening of a believer's soul lies at the end of a painful ordeal. Every success worth the having lies at the end of brave, protracted toil. Twenty years of storm must be battled through by Wilberforce and Clarkson before Negro emancipation is enacted by the British Parliament. At evening time the sky was crimsoned with the flush of victory.

2. This passage has a beautiful application to a Christian old age. Many people have a silly dread of growing old, and look upon gray hairs as a standing libel. But, if life is well spent, its Indian Summer ought to bring a full granary and a golden leaf. The spiritual light at the gloaming of life becomes mellower; it is strained of mists and impurities. The aged believer seems to see deeper into God's Word and further into God's heaven. Not every human life has a golden sunset. Some suns go down under a cloud. At evening time it is cold and dark. I have been looking lately at the testimonies left by two celebrated men who died during my boyhood. One of them was the king of novelists, the other was the king of philanthropists. Both had lost their fortunes and lost their health.

The novelist wrote as follows: "The

old post-chaise gets more shattered at every turn of the wheel. Windows will not pull up; doors refuse to open and shut. Sickesses come thicker and faster, friends become fewer and fewer. Death has closed the long, dark avenue upon early loves and friendships. I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place filled with monuments of those once dear to me. I shall never see the threescore and ten and shall be summed up at a discount." Ah! that is not a cheerful sunset of a splendid literary career. At evening time it looks gloomy and the air smells of the sepulchre.

Listen now to the old Christian philanthropist, whose inner life was hid with Christ in God. He writes: "I can scarce understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be

just as happy without a fortune as with one. Sailors on a voyage drink to ‘friends astern’ till they are half-way across; and after that it is ‘friends ahead.’ With me it has been ‘friends ahead’ for many a year.” The veteran pilgrim was getting nearer home. The Sun of Righteousness flooded his western sky. At evening time it was light.

3. What a contrast there is between the death-bed of the impenitent and that of the adopted child of God, whose hope is anchored to Jesus. The one is dark; a fearful looking forward to a wrath to come. The other is the earnest expectation of an endless day which lies beyond the glorious sunset. I have just come from the sick-room of a woman whose life is ebbing away amid intense bodily suffering. It is one of the most cheerful spots in this sorrow-laden world. Jesus is watch-

ing by that bedside. He administers the cordials. He stays up that sinking head. "I am with you always" is to her the promise and foretoken of that other state of joy, "where I am ye shall be also." At evening time that chamber of death is light !

4. THE CEDAR CHRISTIAN.

STROLLING one bright summer morning over the velvet carpet of "Chatsworth Park" we came suddenly upon a cedar of Lebanon. It was the first and only one we ever saw; our first impulse was to uncover our head, and make obeisance to this monarch in exile, this lone representative of the most regal family of trees upon the globe. Every bough was laden with glorious association to us. Broad, gnarled, severe, rough old tree as it was, yet it blossomed with poetry and hung golden with heavenly teachings. As we gazed through our tears at the exiled sovereign the voice of the psalmist was in our ears, "The righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

With that hardy veteran of Chatsworth in our mind's eye, let us say a word about the style of cedar Christians that we need in our day. Of pliant, willow church-members, of brash and brittle basswood professors, of pretentious, fashion-following, bay-tree Christians, we have quite too many. Give us more cedars for the pulpit and for the pews.

i. The first quality of the cedar is that it grows. It is a live tree. Where there is hearty life there must be growth. And it is the lamentable lack of inward godliness that makes the stunted professor. There is not vitalizing sap enough in his heart-roots to reach up into the boughs of his outward conduct. There is not vigor enough in the trunk of his character to stand erect. No answering showers brought down by fervent prayer cleanse the dust of worldliness from his yellow, sicklied

leaves. There he is—just as he was “set out” in the church a score of years ago; no larger, no broader, no brighter in graces than he was then; the caterpillars of lust having spun their unsightly webs all over his branches. He has not grown an ell in any one Bible trait. He has not yielded one single fruit of the Spirit. He is a cumberer of the ground; in the way of a better man; all the while drinking up God’s pure air and water and yet fulfilling Satan’s purpose. Not of such a prayer-neglecting professor, not of such a time-serving, money-loving, fashion-worshipping professor, could we honestly say, “He grows like a cedar in Lebanon.”

2. But the cedar not only grows; it has a peculiar style of growth which God’s people may well imitate. It grows through all weathers. It is a hardy tree, or else it could not live a month in the arctic cli-

mate of Lebanon's sky-piercing summits. Delicate plants might thrive on the warm lap of southern exposures, but not up among the rifts of whirling snows, or where the steel-like air gleams under the silent moon. Sudden hurricanes may twist off the gorgeous magnolias of the vale, or crack the brittle bay-tree, but let the gale rage ever so fiercely on Lebanon's blustering heights, let the snow-squadrons join battle in the hurtled air, the cedar tosses the tempest from its elastic boughs, and stands like the everlasting mountain under it. In God's Church there are to be found just such *lignumvitæ* characters, storm-proof, gold-proof, temptation-proof. What a plantation of such cedars were the early apostles! What a coronet of stalwart storm-defiers graced the summit of God's Zion in Reformation days! Zwingli of Switzerland—John Knox, who

never feared the face of man—burly Latimer, who marched singing to Smithfield's kindled stake—John Huss, gazing up into the open heavens from the suffocating smoke and flame which are wrapping his tortured limbs—all these were cedars through whose branches the very gales of persecution made glorious music. Here and there is such a cedar Christian discoverable in our century. They never bend. They never break. They never compromise. To such Christians worldliness cometh, and smooth-tongued expediency cometh, and sensual pleasure cometh, and slavery cometh, but “findeth nothing in them.” Popular hurricanes come down amain upon them, smiting a Hopkins, a Pierpont, or a Dudley Tyng in the pulpit—smiting a Wilberforce, a Jay, or an Adams in the legislative hall—smiting a Jonathan Edwards in his quiet study, a missionary

Lyman in his lonely toils, a Neal Dow in his labors for the drunkard, and a Jonas King in his labors for the besotted bigots of Athens. But the cedar of principle proves an overmatch for the blast of selfishness, spite, or superstition. Persecution only makes the roots of resolution strike the deeper, and the trunk of testimony stand the firmer.

3. The greatest peril to such Christians as read these lines will not come in the form of persecution, but rather from those insidious worms that gnaw out the very heart of gospel piety. Secret influences are the most fatal in the every-day life of the every-day, un conspicuous professor. There is a whole colony of busy insects that will try the quality of a believer's timber. And when the community is startled by the spiritual defalcation of some prominent man in the church, or in

a religious society, it is only the crack of a beam or a pillar that was worm-eaten by secret sin long before. He only is a cedar of Christ's training and polishing who is sound to the very core. For the pride of Lebanon was not more famous for its vigor or its hardiness than for its solidity of wood. It knew no decay. It afforded asylum to no stealthy insect turning its aromatic wood into dust and ashes. Therefore did Israel's royal temple-builder select it for the most conspicuous and important portions of the edifice on Mount Moriah. With its fine grain, its high polish, and delightful fragrance, every lintel and every door-post was at once a strength and an ornament to the temple of the living God. So stand the faithful, fearless minister of Christ, the incorruptible Christian patriot, the unflinching testimony-bearer for the truth as it is in Jesus. They bid defiance

to the worm of sin while they live, and to the worm of calumny when they are dead. Centuries hence their memory will be as sound and as fragrant as the chests of sandal-wood in which the Oriental kings were wont to conceal their treasures.

4. The last noticeable thing with the cedar is its breadth of limb. The verdant veteran of Chatsworth had a diameter greater than his height. Elliot informs us that he saw cedars on the top of Lebanon that were thirty feet in circumference of trunk! Their limbs were so wide-spreading that the diameter of the branches from the extreme of one side of the tree to the opposite extreme was one hundred feet! Under that majestic canopy a whole regiment might find shelter. Now, we need not go far to find just such a broad-armed Christian. Broad in his catholic sympathy with all the "faithful in

Christ Jesus" of every sect, broad in his love of man, irrespective of clime, color, or condition, broad in his pecuniary benevolence, is our cedar brother. Hundreds of happy beneficiaries lie down under the shadow of his liberality. The poor scholar whom he helps with books, the poor orphan whom he helps to a home, the poor harlot and the inebriate for whom he builds the asylum, the poor sin-struck heathen man of far-away India to whom he sends the "good tidings," are, each and all, the richer for his broad-limbed beneficence. There is room for regiments of sufferers to bivouac under such a man. It will make a sore and sorrowful void when that imperial cedar is transplanted to the banks of the crystal river in the Paradise of God.

5. *LIVING BY THE DAY.*

“My house was well built,” said a farmer once to me, “for it was built by the day.” That is the way in which the best, strongest and happiest lives are built; they are not constructed “by the job,” but one attainment in grace is laid upon another like the blocks of granite in a solid house wall. Each day brings its duty to be done, its temptation to be met and conquered, its burden to be carried and its progress to be made heavenward. There are 365 days in every year, but really there is only one working day, and that is to-day. Sufficient to each day is the evil thereof.

This is just the sort of living that I commend to my readers. God means to

shut you up to this style of thinking and planning and doing when he makes his gracious promise, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." The journey made up a mountain is simply a succession of steps. If the climber attempts to leap upward he exhausts his strength, if he looks down he grows dizzy, and if he looks too far forward he gets discouraged by the distance yet to be surmounted. So in accomplishing each day's work you have simply to take one step at a time, and to take that wisely is all that you need to think about. Take no anxious thought for the morrow. God never made a Christian strong enough to stand the strain of to-day's duties and all the load of one's anxieties piled upon the top of them. Paul himself would have broken down if he had attempted the foolish experiment. We have a right to ask our Heavenly Father for strength equal

to the day, but we have no right to ask him for one extra ounce of strength beyond it.

My friend, learn to take short views. If you have money enough to-day for your daily wants, and something over for Christ's treasury, don't torment yourself with the idea that you will yet fetch up in the almshouse. If your children cluster around your table to-day, enjoy the music of their voices, train them for God and trust them to God, without racking yourself with a dread that the little ones may be carried off by scarlet fever, or the older ones may fall into bad marriages or some other disaster. Faith carries present loads, meets present assaults, feeds on present promises, and commits the future to a faithful God. Its daily song is :

“Keep thou my feet ; I do not ask to see
The distant scene : one step enough for me.”

So we exhort you again most earnestly to take short views. Let us not climb the high wall till we get to it, or fight the battle till it opens, or shed tears over sorrows that may never come, or lose the joys and the blessings that we have by the sinful fear that God may take them away from us. We need all the grace that he can give us for to-day's battles. I would not penetrate into the secrets which to-morrow hides if I could. It is far better to know Whom we trust, and that he is able to keep all that we commit to him until the last great day.

“ Why forecast the trials of life
With such sad and grave persistence,
And look and watch for a brood of ills
That as yet have no existence ?

“ Strength for to-day is all we need,
For we never will see to-morrow ;
When it comes the morrow will be a to-day,
With its measure of joy or sorrow.”

The earnest Christian who lives by the day not only faces each duty or each trial as it comes, but he also is on the lookout for each day's opportunities for serving his Master. Almost every Christian promises himself that some time or other he will be very holy-minded and very useful. The growing, productive Christian is he who is on the watch for opportunities and grasps them when they come. The beautiful morning-glories which opened in my little garden yesterday are all withered away. So with some precious opportunities to serve my Saviour and to do good to my fellow-man—they will never bloom again. But there were fresh flowers that opened with this morning's sun; even so doth our Master give us a fresh chance to serve him and to bless others every day we live. Here lies the generic difference between profitable and unprofitable Chris-

tians. The one class are always looking for opportunities to do a kind act, to gain an influence, to win a soul to Jesus.

The Earl of Shaftesbury in England and William E. Dodge in America were two men whose lives illustrated grandly the principle of grasping every day's opportunities to strike a blow for Jesus Christ. The holy and heroic Gen. Samuel C. Armstrong, of Hampton Institute—the noblest benefactor the negro has had, next to Abraham Lincoln—left a remarkable paper, written just before his death, in which he says, "I have never made any sacrifices." It was joy and ecstasy, the very life of his life, to be doing good; the "sacrifice" would have been to miss the precious opportunity which each day brought him. Harlan Page made it a rule never to talk to any person even for fifteen minutes without saying something helpful

to profit that person's soul. Our days are very much what we choose to make them. The happy days are those in which we improve the golden occasions, and the most terrible spectre that can haunt us is the ghost of a lost opportunity. That is what will make hell so unendurable to those who fling away Christ's loving offers and their time for repentance.

With new duties come new supplies of grace every morning to those who seek it by earnest prayer. We cannot live on yesterday's meals. As the children of Israel gathered fresh manna every morning, so must we look upward for a fresh supply of heavenly "rations" for the day's march. The early hour is the best for prayer and for feeding on God's word. That godly-minded Christian, Garret Noel Bleecker of New York, used to go home at noonday not only to take his meal with

his family but to have a few quiet moments with his Master. Arthur Tappan had a room up near the roof in his store for noontide devotions. In these times of awful stress and strain on business men, would it not clear their heads and nerve their faith if they would stop, amid the heat of the day's toil and hurry, to have a few minutes face to face with God?

The secret of happy days is not in our outward circumstances, but in our own heart life. A large draught of Bible taken every morning, a throwing open of the soul's windows to the precious promises of the Master, a few words of fervent prayer, a deed or two of kindness to the first person you meet, will brighten your countenance and make your feet "like hinds' feet" for the day's march. If you want to get your aches and your trials out of sight bury

them under your mercies. Begin every day with God, and then, keeping step with your Master, march on toward home over the roughest road, or in face of the hardest winds that blow. Live for Jesus by the day, and on every day, until you come where "the Lamb is the light thereof," and there is no night there.

6. IN THE SUNSHINE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

ONE of the historic landmarks of the church of Christ was that “upper room” in Jerusalem where the Master instituted the sacrament which commemorates his atoning love. After he had broken the bread, and given the cup to his disciples, he summons them to “arise and go hence,” and leads them out towards Gethsemane. What a wonderful walk was that, and what a wonderful talk he gave them as they moved through the silent streets to the vale of Kedron! That chamber had been redolent of his redeeming love; the atmosphere was laden with its sweet fragrance. The first thing he speaks of is the vital union which he has formed between them

and himself—a union as close as that of the parent vine to all its branches and tendrils. Then he tells them that even as the Father had loved him so did he love them, and tenderly charges them, “Abide ye in my love.” Not their love to him, but his love for them. He had created a warm, bright, blessed atmosphere of love, and he urges his little flock to continue in it.

Is it possible for all of us Christians to live steadily in this bright sunshine, where his love is falling in a constant stream of warm effulgence? It must be possible; for our Master never commands what we cannot perform. Sinless perfection may not be attainable in this life; but there is one thing which all of Christ's redeemed people can do, and that is to keep themselves in the delightful atmosphere of his love. It is our fault and our shame that

we spend so many days in the chilling fogs, or under the heavy clouds of unbelief, or down in the damp, dark cellars of conformity to the world. There are three conditions which Christ enjoins upon us. If we fulfill them we shall abide in the sunshine of his love.

i. The first one is obedience. "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." A boy leaves home for school or college and his mother packs his trunk, with many a tear moistening his wardrobe. She puts a Bible there, and says to him, "Now, my dear boy, this you will read every morning and night; and while you are on your knees in prayer your mother is with you."

In like manner we who call ourselves Christians should ever abide in the bright warm atmosphere of our Master's love.

We must heartily accept a whole Christ, both as Saviour and Lord, and accept him without any reserves or limitations. He has a right to command; it is ours simply to obey. Stephen Girard, the Philadelphia millionaire, was once called on by a poor man who wanted employment. Girard told him to go into a vacant lot near by and carry all the stones on one side of the lot to the other side, and the next day to move them all back again. At the end of the week, when he came for his wages, Girard said to him, "I like you."

2. The second direction for keeping in the bright beamings of the divine love is growth in godly character. Turn to the Epistle of Jude and read this: "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God." The construction of a Christian character is like the construction of a house. There

must first be a solid foundation. But some church members never get much beyond this. Up yonder on Lafayette Avenue are long lines of massive stone work, laid there twenty years ago. Those grass-grown stones are the foundation for a Romish cathedral, but no cathedral stands there yet. Some people start with a certain amount of faith in Christ, and profess that before the world. Then they stop there. They do not "add to their faith courage, temperance, meekness, patience, godliness, love," and all the other stones that enter into a solid and beautiful Christian life. Every Sunday they come and draw away more bricks and stones, in the shape of truth; but they do not build them into their character. Such self-stunted professors know but little of the sweet sunshine and joy of Christ's smile. They may be growing rich, or growing popular, or grow-

ing in self-esteem, but they are not growing in grace. They try to live out in another atmosphere than the love of Christ, and their piety is “winter-killed” and withering away. Such religion is a poor joyless thing; it succeeds no better than an attempt to raise oranges among the freezing fogs of Newfoundland.

3. There is one more essential to a strong and a happy life. Keeping Christ's commandments and constructing a solid, godly character cannot be done without divine help. Therefore the apostle adds, “Praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.” I can understand why a backslider does not pray; or, if he does, makes it a hollow formality. But every one who desires to be lifted into the sweet, warm atmosphere of communion with Christ must use the wings of fervent prayer. Those who make it their

business to battle down besetting sins, and to build themselves up in Bible holiness, cannot make headway without constant laying hold of the promises of divine strength. Prayer keeps us in the love of Jesus ; and while keeping in that warm, pure, healthy atmosphere we find that praying has wonderful power. Jesus told his disciples that if they would only abide in his love they might ask what they would “ and it shall be done unto you ! ” Then, my good friend, do you want to be happy ? Do you want to have power with God and peace with yourself ? Do you want to get some instalment of heaven in advance ? There is only one sure way, and that is to live in the light-giving, warmth-giving sunshine of your Saviour’s love.

7. *THE LORD'S SHUT-INS.*

JUST why the loving Master confines some of his choicest and best in rooms of suffering, and cripples others of them in body or in purse, we cannot always tell. One thing is very clear, and that is that he does not mean to cripple their usefulness. To speak for Christ or to work for Christ is often easy and pleasant; but to *bear* for Christ either pain, or poverty, or confinement, with courageous patience, is more eloquent than many a pulpit discourse. No portion of Paul's wonderful career was productive of more solid results than the years of his imprisonment at Rome. He styled himself an "ambassador in chains," and he preached the king-

dom of God to those about him until there were many converts in “Cæsar’s household.” He wrote seven of his thirteen undisputed epistles while he was the prison chaplain under the eyes of Nero’s jailers. One of these was the letter to Philippi, which is the epistle of gratitude for divine mercies and of exultant joy under sharp afflictions.

If the cages of birds are sometimes covered up in order to make them sing, the old hero was caged to furnish to the world one of its most melodious epics of sublime faith in Jesus. Satan afterwards clapped John Bunyan into a prison, and lo, out of the windows of the Bedford jail floated the transcendent allegory of the “Pilgrim’s Progress”!

The service of Jesus Christ is not limited by any stress of circumstances. A sick chamber has often been made a cho-

sen spot for glorifying God. The celebrated Halyburton of Scotland welcomed scores of visitors to that room in St. Andrew's where they stood around his bedside and listened to words that seemed to be inspired by a glimpse of heaven from the land of Beulah. None of his previous sermons equalled his discourses from that bed of suffering. "This is the best pulpit," said he, "that I was ever in. I am laid on this bed for this very end, that I may commend my Lord." He called it a shaking hands with the King of Terrors. After a night of agonizing pain he said to his wife, "Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters; and he said to me, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and I have the keys of death.' He stilled the tempest in my soul, and there is a great calm. I have ripened fast under the bright

sun of righteousness, and had brave showers. Now I am thinking of the pleasant spot of earth that I will soon get to lie in ; I will get my little Georgie in my hand, and we will be a group of *bonnie dust*." After his voice failed him in the last moments he continued to clap his hands in triumph.

It is not only by such joyful testimonies to the sustaining power of divine grace, or by cheerful patience, that the prisoners of Jesus Christ have preached and are preaching his precious gospel. There are many ways of doing good open to invalids. During the years that the wife of Charles H. Spurgeon was confined to her room she conceived the plan of providing commentaries and useful books for poor ministers and village preachers. She told me that over one hundred thousand such volumes had been secured in response to her ap-

peals. When I visited her last summer in the beautiful old home at "Westwood" I found that she was cheering the lonely hours of her widowhood by continuing this labor of love. Some of Charlotte Elliott's sweetest hymns, in England, and some of the best productions of Mrs. Paull, in our own land, have been written during periods of confinement in the chamber of an invalid. A large-hearted lady, shut in from her former activities out-of-doors, spends much of her time in folding and addressing little leaflets of awakening or of consoling truth to those who may be profited by them. In many a house there is a room whose silent influence is felt all over the dwelling. The other members of the family come there to inquire after the sufferer, to bring some choice fruit or pleasant gift, to read aloud, or watch with her through the lonesome night. From that room

steals forth an influence that makes every one gentler and tenderer and more unselfish. Perhaps this may be one of the reasons why God permits some of his children to suffer; they not only grow purer by the chastening, but become evangelists of blessing to others. Paul in his prison prompted many besides Onesiphorus to deeds of sympathy for him, and he evoked such deeds of kindness from his spiritual children at Philippi that he writes to them that their love "hath *blossomed out* afresh." That is the literal rendering of the message sent by the old, sunny-souled prisoner of Jesus Christ. The Master takes great delight in many of his shut-ins. They are weaving bright coronals for themselves, to be worn in that land in which none shall say "I am sick," and neither shall there be any more pain.

8. *JESUS CLOSE BY US.*

"MAKE Christ your constant companion," says my brilliant Scotch friend, Prof. Drummond, in one of those practical addresses which he is scattering like golden grain over our land. This is the secret of a strong, serene and sanctified life. "Lo, I am with you always" is his precious promise; and he is the happiest and the holiest Christian who invites the Master to be ever at his side, and who is becoming more and more changed into his image.

The godly-minded Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, England, kept a portrait of the missionary, Henry Martyn, hanging on the wall of his study. Looking up at the bright, youthful face, he would often

say, "There, see that blessed man. No one looks at me as he does. He seems always to be saying to me, 'Be serious, be earnest, do n't trifle.'" Then bowing toward the benign countenance of Martyn, Simeon would add, "No, I wont. I wont trifle." If the good Cambridge preacher caught a constant inspiration by looking at the silent face of the great missionary, how much more may we do so by keeping our Saviour constantly before us and beside us. He is ever saying to us, Look at me, learn of me, live for me!

Sometimes a smooth-tongued temptation assails us, and when we are wavering a sight of Him who conquered the great adversary breaks upon us, and we get the grace to drive the tempter from us. Sometimes we are inclined to shirk a disagreeable duty or hard task that goes against the grain. How promptly our Master's

voice is heard, "Whosoever will not take up his cross, and come after me, is not worthy of me." At another time our spirits are sinking down towards zero under discouragement or disappointment. Just then the loving countenance draws up very close and we catch the cheering words, "Let not your heart be troubled; I am with you; my grace is sufficient for you." When we are tempted to bolt out a hot resentful word, or to practise some shabby subterfuge, the sorrowful countenance whispers in our ears, "Wound me not in the house of my friends." And when we have come back ashamed and crest-fallen from some cowardly desertion of the right, or some compromise with conscience, oh, how that eye which fell upon skulking Peter seems to say to us, "Will ye also go away? Could ye not watch with me one hour?" Evermore is that divine Master

and Monitor not far from every one of us, watching every step, rebuking every lapse, chiding every delay, and arousing us to every fresh call to duty or grapple with the many-headed devil of selfishness.

Prayer has a new stimulus and encouragement if we realize that Jesus is close by us. He is within call. The telephone is one of the marvels of modern invention, bringing a whole community within speaking distance of each other. Yet it has its defects and limitations; it may be out of order, or be in use by some long-winded customer, or the ear may be wanting at the other end of the wire. But the telephone of faith always reaches the open ear of our beloved Lord; yea, a million voices may all be addressing him at once without delay and without confusion. He is nigh unto all that call upon him: no need of sending forth a messenger on a long jour-

ney. The very phraseology of his promise recalls the familiar process of telephoning : “Thou shalt call and the Lord will answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.” In every phase of prayer, whether confession of sin, or offering thanks, or supplicating help, this blessed near-at-handness of Jesus is a precious encouragement. His seeming delays are not denials of us ; he may be only testing our faith or our sincerity. Do not let us think of prayer so often as the coaxing or the conquering of a reluctant friend, but rather as the confident appeal to One who is always wise, and always willing to give us what we ought to have.

Not only is our loving Master within call ; he is ever within our reach. A very present help is he in time of trouble. Peter sinking in the waves cries out, “Lord, save me !” and immediately the almighty

arm grasps his. While all others on board the tempest-tossed ship were smitten with panic, Paul has One by his side who says to him, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar." And soon afterward, when the weather-beaten old hero faces the savage Nero with cheek unblanched, it is because the Lord Jesus stood with him and strengthened him. One of the chief purposes of trial and affliction is to make us send for our Saviour. If the famine had not reached to the land of Canaan the sons of Jacob never would have found their brother Joseph. If there is no famine in our souls we do not hunger for Christ; blessed be the sharp trial which impels us to throw out a grasping hand on our Elder Brother!

A peculiar trial sometimes besets us. We are perplexed with the mysteries of providence and have an intense craving

for some explanation. We long for complete knowledge—on the spot. The divine dealings with us are dark and incomprehensible. At such times if we will but listen we will hear a Voice saying to us, “I am with you; what I am doing thou understandest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” And so we discover that

“ Behind the dim unknown
Standeth Christ within the shadow
Keeping watch above his own.”

How encouraging is the thought to every awakened sinner that he need not go off searching after a Saviour and feeling after him in the dark! Jesus is already at thy heart’s door, my friend. He is knocking for admission. Let him in! He will come to stay.

Some of us have known lately how close the loving Jesus is in a dying chamber.

In one house the little song-bird of the family was gasping for life, and Christ just opened the cage and let the darling soar up to the sunny climes. A beloved daughter lay dying; but the Master gently said, "She is not dying, she only sleepeth; so give I my beloved sleep." Our gray-haired father or mother is entering the valley of the death-shade; and the calm testimony of their trust is: "I fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

9. SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

WE always think of our Lord and Saviour as a divine teacher, preacher, and worker of wondrous miracles; we seldom or never think of him as a singer. Yet there is every probability that on one occasion his voice joined in a service of sacred song; and he may have done this on other occasions. On that night when he had eaten the paschal supper with his disciples, and delivered his last loving discourse to them, "they sang a hymn"; and we may well suppose that the Master's voice blended with theirs. The hymn usually sung at the close of the passover supper was that majestic old Hebrew song of praise beginning with the words, "Oh,

give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good ; for his mercy endureth for ever." Gethsemane, the betrayal, and the awful conflict in the garden were just before him ; yet our Master set us the sublime example of a "song in the night"—and that, too, the darkest night he had ever known on earth.

A few years afterward Paul and Silas are confined in a stifling dungeon at Philippi—their backs lacerated with the scourgings of their brutal persecutors. Instead of wails and groans, the two heroes break forth into such a triumphal burst of sacred song that their fellow-prisoners are awakened by the extraordinary duet! Paul must have been as familiar with the old Hebrew psalmody as our soldiers were with their war songs around the camp-fires. It was a glorious triumph of spiritual exultation over bodily tortures,

when, in the black gloom of that midnight,

“Paul and Silas, in their prison,
Sang of Christ the Lord arisen.”

In these experiences of our Lord and of his two apostles there were literal songs in the night; and they were the antetypes of thousands of Christian experiences in all subsequent times. It has always been the test of the deepest and the strongest faith that, like the nightingale, it could pour forth its sweetest melodies in the hours of darkness. This is a spiritual phenomenon, not to be explained by ordinary natural law. It is supernatural. The Bible tells us that “God our Maker giveth songs in the night.” This happy phrase explains itself. It means that in times of sorest affliction our Heavenly Father gives to his faithful children cause for songs—both the matter to sing about and the spirit of

grateful praise. While they are sitting under the shadow of severe trial he can wrap them about with "the garment of praise" and fill their mouths with singing. While selfishness is fretting, and unbelief is blaspheming, faith has a voice of its own—pitched to a high key of love and trust, and gratitude and holy joy. That old-time saint had caught this pitch when he sang: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines, and the field shall yield no meat, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." You cannot starve a man who is feeding on God's promises; and you cannot make any man or woman wretched who has a clean conscience, and the smile of God, and the love of Jesus shed abroad in the soul.

What a thrilling outbreak of triumphant faith was that which came from the brave

old Thomas Halyburton of Scotland in the darkest hours of his bereavement! When a much loved son was taken away he makes this record : " This day has been a day to be remembered. Oh, my soul, never forget what this day I reached. My soul had smiles that almost wasted nature. Oh, what a sweet day. About half-an-hour after the Sabbath, my child, after a sharp conflict, slept pleasantly in Jesus, to whom pleasantly he was so often given." His own fatal sickness was very protracted, and was attended with intense suffering. After a night of excruciating pain he said to his wife, " Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters, and he said to me, ' I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and I have the keys of hell and of death.' He stilled the tempest in my soul, and lo! there was a great calm." A philosopher

of the Hume and Huxley school would be likely to dismiss all this as a devout dream of an excited imagination. But Halyburton was a hard-headed professor of theology in a Scotch university—not a style of man easily carried away by the illusions of a distempered fancy. “Thou art beside thyself,” said the pagan Festus to the acutely logical apostle who wrote what Coleridge pronounced to be the most profound production in existence.

No sceptic’s sneers can explain such spiritual phenomena. When men of the calibre of St. Paul sing such “songs in the night” as he sent forth from Cæsar’s pretorian guardhouse, they cannot be explained on any theory of frigid psychology. While dark hours of calamity or bereavement bring to the ordinary man of the world distress and peevish complaints, they bring to a Christ-possessed soul tran-

quilt submission, and often an uplift of triumphant joy. Such experiences are contrary to the ordinary course of nature. They can only be accounted for by that deeper and divine philosophy which makes God to be the direct personal comforter of his own people in their season of sore affliction. When they pass through valleys of the death-shadow it is his rod and his staff that support them. The path of trial may lead down into grim and gloomy gorges that no sunbeams of nature penetrate; but "Thou art with me" is the cheerful song that faith sings along the darksome road. As Maclaren beautifully says: "He who guides into the gorge will guide through the gorge; it is not a *cul de sac* shut in with precipices at the far end; but it opens out on shining table-lands where there is a greener pasturage."

There are some of us old-fashioned

Christians who still believe that a loving God creates dark nights as well as bright noondays ; that he not only permits trouble, but sometimes sends troubles on his own children for their spiritual profit. As many as he loves he sometimes corrects and chastens, and a truly filial faith recognizes that all his dealings are perfectly right. “ Happy is the man whom God correcteth ; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.” I havs seen a farmer drive his ploughshare through a velvet greensward, and it looked like a harsh and cruel process ; but the farmer’s eye foresaw the springing blades of wheat, and that within a few months that torn soil would laugh with a golden harvest. Deep soul-ploughings bring rich fruits of the Spirit. I have often had occasion to tell my parishoners that there are bitter mercies as well as sweet mer-

cies ; but they are all mercies, whether given to us in honey or given in wormwood.

The day is God's and the night also. This is as true in the realm of grace as in the realm of nature. God orders the withdrawal of the sun at evening time, yet that very withdrawal reveals new glories in the midnight sky. Then, how the creation widens to our view ! The stars that lay concealed behind the noontide rays rush out and fill the spangled canopy. So in the night seasons which often descend upon the Christian, fresh glories of the divine love are revealed, fresh power is given to our faith, fresh victories are won, and a new development is made of godly character. What sweet voices—like "the influences of the Pleiades"—are God's promises to our chastened hearts ! What deep melodies of praise do the night hours

hear! The Lord commandeth his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me.

I trust that these simple, honest words may come as a lamp into some sick chamber, or into some house of sorrow, or into some sorely-troubled hearts. Bethany had to become a dark town to two poor women before Jesus could flood it with joy. Before Gethsemane's midnight struggle Christ himself chanted a hymn; and happy is the man or woman who can go into life's hard battle singing! The ear of God hears no sublimer music than a Christian's songs in the night.

10. WAITING ON GOD.

"THEY that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles." This passage from the old Jewish prophet has the ring of an Alpine horn. It is very easy to misunderstand this word "wait," and regard it as meaning inactive passivity. There is a vast deal of nerve in the original Hebrew; it signifies to be strong enough to hold out. It expresses a solid durableness such as belongs to a stiff piece of oak that never bends and never breaks under heavy pressure. Thence the word came to signify patience as opposed to worry and despondency. Waiting, in this oft-quoted text, denotes a habit of mind—a devout habit that loves to call on God, a

submissive habit that is ready to receive just what God sees fit to send, an obedient habit that is glad to do just what God commands, a stalwart habit of carrying such loads as duty lays upon our backs. It is a religion of conscience, and not a mere effervescence of pious emotion. In short, it is a grace, just as much as the grace of faith, or love, or humility.

If you and I have this grace, and if we practice it, what may we expect? The first thing is that God will "renew our strength." For every new occasion, every new trial, every new labor, we shall get new power. If we have failed, or have been foiled, God will put us on our feet again. The spiritually weak will gain strength, and those who were strong before will wax stronger. I have often gone to Saratoga in the heat of early summer, quite run down, and my vitality burned

out as coal gets exhausted in the bunkers of a steamer. Then I repaired to one of the tonic springs and "waited" on its bubbling waters, trusting them and taking them into my system. Presently a new appetite for food was awakened, and a new life crept into my ten fingers; walking became a delight and preaching as easy as for a lark to sing. All this renewal of vitality was the result of waiting on one of those wonderful health-fountains. I brought but little there. I took a great deal away. Just such a well of spiritual force is the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to him in a receptive, suppliant, hungering spirit, he restores our souls, he heals our sickness, he girds up our weak will as with steel, he infuses iron into our blood, he makes our feet like hinds' feet; we can run without getting weary. Paul had put himself into just such a connec-

tion with the Source of all power when he exclaimed, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

All the men and women of power are men and women of prayer. They have the gift of the knees. "Waiting on the Lord" by prayer has the same effect on them that it has on an empty bucket to set it under a rainspout. They get filled. The time spent in waiting upon God is not wasted time. "I have so much to do," said Martin Luther, "that I cannot get on with less than two hours a day in praying." When I have heard Spurgeon pray I have not been so astonished at some of his discourses. He fed his lamp with oil from the King's vessels, and his sermons were full of light.

Waiting on God not only gives strength, it gives inspiration. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." God means

that every soul which waits on him shall not creep in the muck and the mire, nor crouch in abject slavery to men or devils. When a soul has its inner life hid with Christ and lives a life of true consecration it is enabled to take wing, and its "citizenship is in heaven." He catches inspiration; he gains wide outlooks; he breathes a clear and crystalline atmosphere. He outflies many of the petty vexations and grovelling desires that drag a worldling down into the mire. What cares the eagle as he bathes his wing in the translucent gold of the upper sky for all the turmoil, the dust, or even the murky clouds that drift far beneath him? He flies in company with the sun. So a heaven-bound soul flies in company with God.

You may gain all this strength and reach these altitudes of the Christian life, my friend, if you will wait steadily on God

and knit your soul's affections fast to Jesus Christ. You will find a wonderful lift in your religion. You will be delighted to find what power it has to carry you clear of low, base, grovelling desires, and to inspire high ambitions and holy thoughts. It will kindle joy in the darkest hours of affliction, and keep you as serene as the stars which no storm-clouds can ever reach. Try all this for yourself. Quit waiting on your fellow-men's opinions and rules and ways of living, and try waiting on God. Try the wings of prayer. Set your affections on things above, and insure your heart's best treasures by lodging them in heaven.

Keeping thus the Godward side of your life clear and strong, your religion will be all the stronger on its manward side. The celestial springs will brighten and fertilize and refresh the lowly valleys of

your every-day existence. Christ will be with you every day in your home, in your business, in your fields, in your shop, in your humblest toils. Christ will sweeten your daily cup. His love will lighten every cross and every care. Don't expect to get to heaven before your time; wait on the Lord down here.

“The daily round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask :
Room to deny ourselves—a road
To bring us daily nearer God.”

11. PURITAN HOMES AND THANKSGIVING DAYS.

THERE is a rivulet of Yankee blood in my veins through the line of the Led-yards; and I am not ashamed of my kinship with either the hero who defended Fort Griswold, or the other hero who tracked his way into Siberia and died, like Livingstone, while trying to explore the Dark Continent. Part of my school days were spent (in the Cayuga Lake region of New York) among a colony from Berkshire County, Mass. How proud they were of their nativity in the most picturesque county of New England! How eagerly they welcomed every letter from Lee or Lenox or Barrington! How devoutly they cherished every custom of

their Puritan ancestors! They “opened their windows” towards old Berkshire, as exiled Daniel did his towards the city on Mount Zion.

I boarded in the family of a primitive Yankee deacon—such as Mrs. Stowe has limned in her best portraiture. The honest old saint was no more troubled with any doubts about the Pentateuch than about the sun rising “on time”; he no more dreamed of any New Departure in theology than he did of going out to plough on a Sabbath morning. His gospel milk never curdled. True to the ancient traditions, he “kept Saturday night,” for he held that the Lord’s Sabbath began with the sunset on the previous evening. Promptly at the minute all secular work was laid aside; even his venerable wife put away her knitting-needles; the “chores” were all finished up, and the family gath-

ered around the hickory fire for a genuine domestic worship. Good books were read—stiff, marrowy books they were too, and no modern syllabubs—and before the serene and solemn evening closed the patriarch opened Scott's family Bible, and, as Burns says, he "waled a portion with judicious care." After reading the text he read the practical observations also; then, in his prayer, he came into close grips and wrestled with God. The Sabbath in that household—yes, and in almost every household of the village—was *kept*, and so stoutly hemmed was it that it never raveled out into unseemly frivolities.

The village meeting-house (it was not the fashion to call it "church"), to which everybody went, was a plain structure, and the square, high-backed pews were guiltless of paint or damask. Half-way up the wall was perched the pulpit, like a martin box.

The village pastor—whose name, Seth Smith, was as severely simple as his costume—ascended to his perch by a winding stair. On bitter winter days he kept on his camlet cloak and knit woolen mittens until he warmed up to his work. As for the mothers in Israel, they kept their feet from freezing by foot-stoves well stocked with hickory coals. The discourse was no light diet of condiments and confectionery; it was strong, solid, substantial meat, as homely and brawn-making as the pork and beans which furnished the family dinner. Bible doctrine was the backbone of the sermon, and it was served warm. That godly minister of the Word preached the Word—preached it without defalcation or discount, and preached as if the surges of eternity were rolling against the church door. He believed in heaven, and he believed in a hell; they both seemed close at

hand—as close by as the tombs of the villagers who slumbered around the sanctuary. Nor did any impenitent soul go out from before that pulpit with any such delusion as that he would have another chance for repentance after his own bones were laid in that churchyard. Often there was sweetness in the sermons also, as well as strength—honey out of Samson's lion—the sweetness of the Christian's promises and sweet glimpses of the saint's everlasting rest. After the services ended we all went homeward, well stocked with Bible and Catechism; and the family dinner was eaten as the sun was wheeling into the west. When his last rays departed the holy hours were ended, and the Sunday evening was spent in secular reading, or in a visit to a neighbor's, where the day's sermon was discussed, and the latest news from old Berkshire. Oh, the blessed

old Puritan Sabbaths ! Will they ever come back again ? Strict they were, no doubt, and because our forefathers worshipped a strict God : severe they were in some of their restraints on carnal appetites, and lacking in some pleasant things they ought to have had, but they were a glorious discipline ; they girded our loins with mighty truths, they put iron into our blood, they made the men and women that have made the backbone of American character.

Of course, in such a Yankee community the annual Thanksgiving Day was the chief festival of the year. It was more jubilant than Christmas, more impressive than New-Year's Day ; it was the king-day of the calendar. Afar its coming shone. We boys counted the time until its approach. The night before was a sad time in all the barnyards and turkey-cotes

and chicken-roosts ; for the slaughter was terrible, and the cry of the feathered tribe was like the “mourning of Hadadrimmon.” For that Thanksgiving service the village pastor made diligent preparation, and the choir rehearsed their finest “fugues” and most resonant anthems. For that Thanksgiving dinner the house-wife tasked her culinary skill ; it was the feast of fat things, the masterpiece of domestic gastronomy, at which the most rigid Puritanism ate, drank, and was merry. Children and grandchildren, kith and kindred, gathered to these festivities in the old homestead ; for, as in the times of David at Bethlehem, “there was a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.”

These two days, the weekly Sabbath and the annual Thanksgiving Day, have been the type-days of the best era of New England. They were typical of the no-

blest traits of New England character. Reverence for Jehovah, faith in his Word to the uttermost syllable, loyalty to law, cheerfulness under adversities and in a hard fight for daily bread, often out of a stubborn soil—a sturdy life sweetened by fireside joys—all these were the fruitage of the Puritan home. It was the real training-school for both church and commonwealth. Both patriotism and piety rooted under those hearth-stones.

If any one wants to see a fair picture of the Puritan homes threescore and four-score years ago, let him read Dr. Horace Bushnell's *Age of Homespun* (delivered at the Litchfield County Centennial), or Lyman Beecher's autobiography, or, best of all, that charming tract in which Father Goodell described the rustic cabin in which he was born and bred. The house had no paint on its clap-boards, no carpet on

its floor, and no lock on a single door. But a godly mother sang hymns at her spinning-wheel, and every acre of the farm was prayed over as well as plowed over; the Thanksgiving meal had the sweet smell of the field which God had blessed. "Those royal men and women of homespun!" exclaims Bushnell. "How great a thing to them was religion! the district school was there, and the great Bellamy and Edwards were there in the mountain peaks of divine government, and between them are close living and hard work, but they are kings alike in all!"

In those Puritan homes the American Board of Foreign Missions was nurtured; its early heroes were trained there. From those homes went out the pioneers who rang the first church bells in the great West. Wedlock had not lost its sanctity in those homes, nor had the filthy facilities

of divorce laws rotted off the tie. Orthodox faith was so anchored to Bible and catechism that it did not drift into new departures.

To recall that steel-bright and strong-stitched era of New England life is a wholesome memory and study. It may quicken the old flames, and renew the old faith. The nation looks to the Land of Puritans yet; and if Plymouth Rock gives way we shall all go down—and other lands may be dragged down with us!

12. A PRECIOUS FAITH.

THERE is a legend that a traveller over the desert who was nearly perishing with hunger came upon the spot where a company had lately encamped. Searching about for some article of food, he found a small bag which he hoped might be a bag of dates. Opening it, he discovered that it contained shells and silver coins. Throwing it down, in bitter disappointment, he exclaimed, "Alas! it is nothing but money!" A single date or a fig would have been worth more to him than a chest-full of gold. There is a time coming to all of us when we would gladly surrender the wealth of the whole world for what an apostle once called "a like precious faith."

Peter was partial to this word, precious ; it is one of the ear-marks to establish the identity of authorship in the two Epistles which bear his name. He speaks of the precious blood of Christ, of a precious cornerstone, of the precious trial of our faith, and of precious and exceeding great promises. Among this jewel-cluster there is none more full of meaning than when he speaks of “them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (New Revision.)

Faith is confiding trust. “Ah, but my faith was anything but precious to me,” says some one, “for I trusted a man who wronged me out of thousands of dollars.” Your faith, my friend, was not a wrong principle, but you bestowed it on the wrong person. His worthlessness made the trust worthless. Without mutual con-

fidence all the sweetest intercourse of domestic life and all the operations of trade would come to an instant halt. If faith in one another is so indispensable to the ordinary transactions of life, faith in the divine Redeemer is indispensable to our salvation. It is the very core of Bible-religion.

But this saving faith is vastly more than a good opinion about Christ, or a belief in Christ. Multitudes of intelligent sinners have this. Saving faith is not only a confidence in the atoning Saviour; it is a strong grasp of this Saviour and a union of heart and life to him. It is the act of trust by which I, a person, unite myself to another person, even to the Son of God. It is unspeakably precious, because it is the source of all my spiritual life. No grace until that grace comes. Faith drives the nail which fastens me

to Jesus, and then loves clinches it ; faith ties the knot, and true love makes it tighter and stronger every hour.

1. Faith is precious because it is the channel of connection through which Jesus pours the life stream into my soul. The value of the channel is what it brings to me. The lead pipe which passes from the street in under my house may be worth only a few cents a pound, but the water it conducts is the life of my family. Christ dwells in our hearts only through faith. The cause of drought in a Christian or in a church is that sin has obstructed the faith-pipe, and Christ is shut off. A revival, or a re-living, means a clearing out of the spiritual channel.

2. The preciousness of faith lies also in its protection from deadly adversaries. We read of the "shield of faith," but it has been well said that Christ is the ac-

tual shield, and faith is only the grasping arm which holds it up before us. A false faith inspires a false security. Right there lies the awful danger of many in our congregations. They are trusting in their own morality, or in their good associations, or perhaps in the popular delusion of a second probation after death. Christ is the actual Protector. His presence barricades my heart from the assaults of the tempter. His strength is made perfect in and for our weakness.

3. Precious is this Christ-faith, also, because it imparts power. As a principle of action throughout all human history faith has been the inspiration of progress. The human mind is at its best and strongest when under this inspiration, whether it be elevating Galileo's telescope, or steering Columbus' pinnace, or trailing Morse's and Field's telegraph-cable through stormy

seas. The moment that the man with the withered arm exercised faith in Christ the divine power shot into that paralyzed limb, and he lifted it. Faith calculates on this reserved strength, and is not afraid to essay difficult tasks. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Here is the encouragement for young converts who propose to make a public confession of Christ; they can calculate just as confidently on their Master's perpetual aid as they can on the rising of to-morrow's sun.

4. What consolations too doth this precious faith afford! How it restores the balance between all the inequalities of life! Are you poor? Yes, but richer than Croesus with the uncountable riches of Christ. Have you met with a heavy loss? Yes; but you open the blessed Book and read that to you "are given

precious and exceeding great promises." Suppose that you had received a letter announcing the loss of the money you were depending on for support. While you are reading it a generous friend happens in who observes the sadness on your face, and asks to read the letter. When he has finished it he quietly remarks, "Do n't worry; I'll take care of this." Your countenance lights up in an instant. So the blessed Jesus draws up closely to the bereaved mother and whispers, "I have that precious child in my eternal keeping;" so he says to the disheartened minister, "Go on and sow my gospel-seed and I will take care of the harvest;" yea, in all the dark, trying hours faith trims her lamp with the oil of the promises which Jesus furnisheth. Heaven is as yet only a promise; but to the believer it would not be one whit more a certain-

ty if his feet were already in the golden streets.

5. This Christ-faith is so precious, also, because it is so costly. On Christ's part it cost Gethsemane's agony and Calvary's sacrifice. On our part it costs repentance of sin, self-surrender, the denial of greedy lusts and hard battles with temptation. A very hot furnace is often required to make its pure gold shine; and roaring tempests are often let loose in order to tighten the hold of its anchor.

13. *SEVEN JEWELS IN THE CHRISTIAN'S CASKET.*

WHAT will I gain by loving and serving God? That is a very legitimate question for any one to ask, and I find God's own answer to this vital question condensed into the few closing lines of the ninety-first Psalm. Here they are: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." These are the seven rewards of a godly life. These are the seven jewels in the Christian's casket. Look at them, my

reader, till you admire them ; look at them till you covet them and pray for the Holy Spirit to help you secure them ! These seven wonderful promises are made only to those who "set their love" on God. That means to give God your heart. What will he do in return for you ?

i. The first reward is deliverance from the dominion of sin and the power of the devil. Our pathway through this world is lined with temptations, and often the soil beneath us is honeycombed with explosives as dangerous as dynamite. Such temptations to fleshly lusts as beset Joseph and David, such temptations to cowardice as beset Daniel, and such temptations to self-conceit as beset Peter, are to be encountered. Jesus Christ comes to the rescue. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. That means a pardon of sin so complete that it kisses

away the tears on the cheek of Penitence. That means a full salvation. The bigger the cup we bring the more it will hold. This rescuing work of our Saviour continues all the way to heaven, and when we get there and see what a dangerous road we traveled, we will want to spend the first century in singing praises for his atoning blood and redeeming grace. Suppose that it were possible for us up there to get a distant glimpse of hell, how we would thrill with joy over our merciful deliverance!

2. The second blessing promised is security. God says, "I will set him on high." Fortresses in olden times were built on lofty elevations; and our God is the stronghold into which the righteous man runneth and is safe. When we embrace Jesus Christ by faith, and join our weakness to his strength, we have a de-

lightful sense of safety. We know whom we have believed, and are perfectly sure that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him. I once spent a night in the castellated convent of Mar Saba and heard the jackals howl in the gorge of the Kedron beneath us, and I saw the Bedouin prowling outside of the wall. So every child of God who is lodged in the stronghold of redemption may let Satan's jackals howl and let the adversary prowl as long as he will. We are safe while on the rock ; but God makes no promises to backsliders who wantonly wander away from the citadel. The history of every faithful Christian is full of special providences. When a band of Scottish Covenanters were pursued by their enemies up into a mountain their leader prayed, "Oh, Lord, cast the lap o' thy cloak about puir old Saunders and these thy puir lambs !"

Immediately a thick mist fell and screened them from their pursuers.

3. This brings us to the third precious promise : "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." How closely these two words, "call" and "answer," come together!—the prayer going up and the answer coming down. I do n't believe that a true Christian ever yet breathed a right prayer in a right spirit and received no answer. If we delight ourselves in the Lord he delights to give us the desires of our hearts. God loves to give to them who love to let him have his wise and loving way. When we ask for a blessing we must work for that blessing at the same time, or else the acts of our lives will contradict the utterances of our lips. What a glorious epic the triumph of victorious faith will make! Prayer is faith's pull at the rope, and Spurgeon truly says that he who wins is the

man who pulls boldly and continuously until the great bell rings in the ear of the Infinite Love.

4. What music to the soul there is in the fourth promise: "I will be with him in trouble"! God's people must take their share of this universal malady, for all men are born to it as certainly as the sparks fly upward. The first sound that escapes from the lips of infancy is a cry of want or pain; the last sound on the dying bed is often a groan or a painful respiration. But under the aching heart and fainting spirit God puts the everlasting arm. Jesus declares to us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" "in me ye shall have peace." It is not in the power of any amount of troubles to wreck the true Christian as long as his will is sweetly submissive to God's will.

Blessed be the discipline that makes us

reach our soul's roots into closer union with Jesus! Blessed be the gale that shakes down the golden fruit from our branches! Sunshiny days often bring out adders; but in dark nights we look for him who comes over the billows with the cheerful hail: "Lo! I am with you; be not afraid!"

5. The next promise is one of promotion: "I will honor him." How? With wealth and wordly rank? Not always; but with something infinitely better. "I call you my friends," says the glorious Son of God. That approving smile of the Master gives an inward joy beyond any roar of earthly acclamations. "Them that confess me I will confess before my Father in heaven." When a marshal of France fell on the battlefield the emperor hung the grand cross of the Legion of Honor on his breast, and the old soldier died with a

gleam of joy on his countenance. But what is that in comparison to the promise made to the humblest follower of Christ : “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”! There will be some wonderful promotions up in heaven, when many a neglected sufferer from a hovel or an attic shall be called up into the royal family, and when some hard-toiling, ill-paid frontier missionary shall receive his sparkling diadem. Be of good cheer, brother, your turn will come. “Them that honor Me I will honor.” We shall be kings and priests unto God.

6. In those olden times length of days was regarded as a special evidence of the divine favor, and it is still true that obedience to God’s laws written on the human body commonly lengthens life. But the promise, “With long life will I satisfy him,” goes deeper than chronology. It

describes a life that is long enough to fulfil life's highest purpose. If you and I live long enough to do what God made us for, and Christ redeemed us for, ought not that to satisfy us? Who would ask for anything more? Life is measured by deeds, and not by hour marks on a dial. In the warm morning sun of grace many a young soul has grown fully ripe for a harvest of glory.

7. The last promise is the Kohinoor diamond of them all: "I will show him my salvation." This word does not signify the process of being saved; it signifies the result of being saved, and that is—life everlasting. The word translated "show" means to see with joy. He shall gaze with delight on the glory that is in store for him; he can say: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

This last promise spans the chasm and reaches over into the magnificent inheritance of the saints in light.

Once more let us tell over these jewel passages, rendered according to their most literal meaning : " Because a man falleth in love with me I will rescue him from danger. I will set him up on a stronghold because he knoweth my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer his prayer. I am with him in every time of trouble. I will deliver him and honor him with my favor. He shall live long enough to be satisfied ; and then he will behold with joy his everlasting salvation."

Here are seven precious promises of what a loving God will do for us. If, through Christ's redeeming and renewing grace, we reach that celestial home we shall see those fulfilled promises shining like the seven candlesticks before the throne.

14. *MOTHERS IN ISRAEL.*

WHEN the Hebrew matron called out to Joab from the walls of the beleaguered city of Abel, and exhorted him to spare the town and "a mother in Israel," she did more than she bargained for. She not only saved her own life, but she originated a fine proverbial expression which has constantly been applied to good women who have distinguished their maternity by a beautiful and godly influence. The holy-hearted Hannah heads the roll of these model mothers—the woman who dedicated her first-born son to God in those memorable words—"for this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore I have lent

him to the Lord ; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord." Samuel also heads the roll of eminent servants of God who owed an incalculable debt to wise maternal influence.

What was true in ancient times has been true ever since. At the starting point of a vast majority of the best Christian lives stands a Christian mother. When I was a student in Princeton Theological Seminary the chairman of the examining board requested all of us who had praying mothers to rise up, and nearly the whole one hundred and fifty leaped instantly to their feet. There we stood, a living witness to the power of a mother's prayers and of her shaping influence and example. My own widowed mother was one of the best that God ever gave to an only son. She was more to me than school, or college, or pastor, or all combined. In our early rural

home the first Sabbath-school I ever attended had but one scholar, and she was the superintendent; the only book studied was God's book, and committed to memory. During my infancy she dedicated me to the Christian ministry, and kept that steadily before her own eye and mine. I cannot now fix the date of my conversion; it was her constant influence that led me gradually along, and I grew into a religious life under her potent training, and by the power of the Holy Spirit working through her untiring agency. If all mothers were like her the "church in the house" would be one of the best feeders of the church in the public sanctuary.

We ministers must not take on airs. There is a ministry that is older and deeper and more potent than ours; it is that ministry that presides over the crib, and impresses the first gospel influence upon

the infant soul. Before the pulpit begins or the Sunday-school begins the mother has already begun, and has been moulding the plastic wax of character for weal or woe, for heaven or hell. A prodigious power this; it is the same power which sent Samuel out of the godly home of Hannah and wicked Ahaziah out of the home of godless Jezebel. Both of them "walked in the way of his mother." Far be it from me to underrate the influence of fathers for good or evil. But still the fact remains that it is mainly the mother who shapes the home influence and imparts to it its prevailing atmosphere; for the most important part of moral education is *atmospheric*. The purity or impurity, the tonic or the demoralizing qualities of that atmosphere of the home, depend, for the most part, on the mother: the sovereign of the home. There is her throne; there her

sway ; there she can make or mar the destiny of the immortal soul beyond any one this side of the throne of God. Among eminent living ministers none preaches the great vital doctrine of the atonement more powerfully than Dr. Newman Hall of London ; he almost idolized his mother, and has told me that the first words she ever taught him were, “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.” That text became the key-note of his grand ministry, and of his world-known tractate, “Come to Jesus.” Susannah Wesley’s hand rings all the Methodist church bells around the globe to-day. Suppose that Lord Byron had been reared by such a mother as Newman Hall and the Wesleys had; the world might have escaped the moral leprosy that tainted so many of the brilliantly bad pages that he scattered far and wide.

Would that I could burn it into the

heart of every mother who reads these lines that, under God, she is chiefly responsible for the moral and spiritual welfare of her household. If the mother is a frivolous fashion-worshipper, or is utterly prayerless and irreligious, or even careless of the spiritual welfare of the children, the whole home atmosphere catches the taint. The downward pull of her home preaching is quite too strong for the upward pull of the best preaching in God's house on the Sabbath. On the other hand, if she does her utmost to make the religion of Jesus attractive to her family, if she is watchful of every opportunity to lead them Christward, if she follows up the effect of Sabbath-gospel by the powerful influence of home-gospel, then there is almost a moral certainty that God will send his converting grace into that household. Oh, mothers in Israel, try the blessed experiment!

Carlyle found the teachings and the granitic piety of his old Scotch mother about the chief breakwater against skepticism; his rugged roughness seems always to have sweetened in her presence. That eminent preacher, Richard Cecil of London, tells us that when he was a youth he tried his utmost to be an infidel; but his mother's beautiful and eloquent Christianity was too much for him. He never could answer that. Sometimes she used to talk to him and weep as she talked. He says, "I flung out of the house with an oath; but I wept, too, when I got into the street. Sympathy is the powerful engine of a mother." Yes, there is a power in her love, when it is reinforced by the grace of God, to reach and bring down the most stubborn heart; it is a power that goes miles deeper than pulpit appeals, for it links itself with the primal instincts of our

nature. If every parent were thus faithful in prayer and winsome example we should behold what Dr. Horace Bushnell called "the out-populating power of the Christian stock." The family would become the nursery and training-school of religion. The home of natural birth would become the place of the new birth, and children—instead of running loose on the open common of sin, to be pursued by "revival efforts" in after years—would be led early to Jesus and into his church fold.

"Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages," said the Egyptian princess to Jochebed, the mother of Moses. She got her wages in better coin than silver or gold. She got them in the joys a mother feels when she yields up a part of herself to sustain her darling child; she got them in the love of the babe she nursed; she got them in the

glorious service which her son wrought for Israel in after years. She was paid in the heavenly coin with which God pays good mothers. For all her anxieties, and all her exertions to preserve the life of her "goodly child," was she abundantly rewarded.

When God lays a new-born babe in the arms of a mother he says to her heart, "Take this child and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages." The answer of maternal love should be, "Oh God, thou hast put thy noblest workmanship into my hands. I accept the precious trust. I will shelter this young life under thy mercy-seat. I will be truthful that it may never learn falsehood. I will nurse this soul in its infancy with the sincere milk of love that in after years it may bear strong meat for strong service of God and righteousness. Oh, Heavenly Father, make my life

in harmony with thyself, that this young life may reflect thy blessed image in following my example!"

To such pious fidelity God offers the highest wages; he pays the heart's claim in the heart's own coin. Faithful Hannah found her great reward in Samuel's great career. Moses on the Mount was the "wages" of the poor Hebrew mother who cradled him in her basket of rushes. Saint Augustine's mighty service for the gospel was the best reward that God could give Monica; our Washington was God's splendid recompense to Washington's good mother. The Lord never breaks his covenant with those who fulfill their covenant with him.

15. CHRIST KNOWETH HIS OWN.

JESUS knoweth them that are his. "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." He can call every one of the flock by name. The officers of a church may be deceived in many cases of those who apply for admission to membership; but no putting on of "sheep's clothing" can mislead the omniscient Shepherd. There is a wide-spread religious interest in the land, but among the many thousands that profess conversion it is not possible that Christ himself can be deceived as to a solitary case. Not only does he read every heart to the bottom; it is by the operation of his divine Spirit that every soul is regenerated. Not

every one who enters an inquiry-room finds Christ; and not every one who attends a "meeting of converts" is genuinely converted. Those who begin to lead a new life have got the new heart; those who follow the Shepherd have entered into the flock. There is a solemn warning in this fact. There is a precious comfort in it, too; for the Saviour knows perfectly well whom he is saving.

Not only does Jesus Christ know exactly who have come into his true flock, but he knows all about every one of them—their strong points and their weak points, their besetting sins and their new experiences of grace just beginning to sprout in their hearts. When we are sick we send for the old family physician; he is best acquainted with our constitutions. It is half the battle in family government for the parent to understand thoroughly the

qualities of a child. Here is one gentle boy who can be led by a cotton thread ; and there is another who snaps the cords of restraint as Samson broke the seven green withes. Some parents pay dearly for their ignorance or wilful blindness to the real character of their children. That was a wise as well as a loving mother who said, " I don't find it so hard to bring children up as I do to take them down, when they need it."

Our blessed Master, in his family discipline, commits no mistakes. When he takes an immortal soul under his loving care and into his training-school he understands the character of all his pupils. Scott's "Jeanie Deans" put it very well when she said, " There is Ane wha kens better what is for our gude than we ken oursells." Christ detects and exposes the self-seeking ambition of certain disciples

by setting a little child in the midst of them to teach them humility and unselfishness. In his raw inexperience Simon Peter bragged loudly of his loyalty : but the Master takes him down by the startling announcement, “ Before the cock crows thou shalt deny me thrice ! ” Jesus discovered the splendid natural qualities in Saul of Tarsus which converting grace could mould into a leadership of the churches ; and what a tremendous schooling he gave him before he graduated ! The same Great Shepherd has a place of usefulness in his flock for humble Tryphena and Tryphosa, for Tertius with his pen and for Dorcas with her needle. Jesus knows just what is in every one of us, and just how much can be got out of us. This makes him, not a hard, exacting Master, but the most forbearing and considerate of employers and guardians. He never lays on weak shoul-

ders the loads which only stalwarts can carry. All the while, too, how sweetly come the encouraging words, "I am with you always; my grace is sufficient for you; as thy days thy strength shall be." He calls us not slaves; he calls us friends.

How perfectly acquainted he is, too, with all our weaknesses! He knoweth our frame; he remembereth we are but dust. Here is great encouragement for penitent sinners. Those poor fellows who drift from their dram-dens into the Jerry McAuley Mission House find there a pitying Shepherd who welcomes the most wretched outcast who has been bedraggled in the mire. Up at the other end of the scale Christ is equally conscious of the intellectual doubts and difficulties with which some Christians of skeptical temperaments have to contend. He quenches no smoking flax; he breaks no bruised reeds. The

secret sorrow which I dare not breathe to the most intimate friend I can freely unbosom to my Saviour. Ah, how well he knows every thorn that pricks my foot, and every wound that trickles its silent drops from the bleeding soul! This is a wondrous encouragement to prayer. For my Physician never will administer the wrong medicine, and I am sure he never will refuse to hear my pull at "the night-bell" in the hour of sudden distress.

The fact of Christ's perfect knowledge of all our needs and requirements throws great light on some dark providences. It explains some mysteries : why one of us is put up and another is put down ; why one is prospered and another is impoverished ; why one seems to run before the breeze and another is buffeted with contrary winds. Dear, loving Master ! He knoweth what is for our good. Let him probe

to the bottom if the wound requires it. He knoweth what is in me; yes, and what ought to come out of me, if I would attain to full health and robustness of spirit. Far better the probe and the pruning-knife than to be cast out as incurable cumberers of his fold. If it is a joy to know whom we have believed it is equally a joy that "he knoweth them that are his." There is a bond of reciprocal knowledge and affection between the Redeemer and his redeemed ones. Christ even compares it to the unity between the everlasting Father and the Son; for as the Father knoweth the Son so doth the Shepherd know his flock! This is an overwhelming thought; and it points onward to an intimacy of everlasting love in heaven.

16. THE HONEY OF GOD'S WORD.

A SINGULAR incident in old Hebrew history illustrates the sweetness and light that flow from God's blessed Word. Jonathan was leading the army of Israel in pursuit of the Philistines, and King Saul had forbidden the troops to taste of food during the march. When the troops reached a forest where the bees had laid up their abundant stores several honeycombs were found lying upon the earth. Jonathan—not having heard of the royal edict—put forth the rod in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put it to his mouth, “and his eyes were enlightened.” Refreshment came to his hungry frame and enlightenment to his

eyes, which were dim with faintness and fatigue.

What a beautiful parable this incident furnishes to set forth one of the manifold blessings of God's Word! In the superbly sublime nineteenth Psalm David pronounces that word to be sweeter than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. In the same passage he declares that "it is pure, enlightening the eyes." Again the psalmist says: "The entrance of thy word giveth light." It is not the careless reading or the listless hearing of the book, but its entrance into the soul which produces this inward illumination. There is a sadly increasing ignorance of the Scriptures; when read publicly in the sanctuary thousands give but little heed. They do not take the vitalizing, heaven-sent truth into their souls as Jonathan took the honey into his system.

But when the Word is partaken of hungrily, and the Holy Spirit accompanies it, there is a revelation made to the heart like that which the poor blind boy had after the operation of a skilful oculist. His mother led him out-of-doors, and, taking off the bandages, gave him his first view of sunshine and sky and flowers. "Oh, mother," he exclaimed, "why did you never tell me it was so beautiful?" The tears started as she replied. "I tried to tell you, my dear; but you could not understand me." So the spiritual eyesight must be opened in order that the spiritual beauty and wisdom and glory of the divine Word may be discovered. Many a poor sinner has never found out what a glorious gospel our gospel is until he has swallowed the honey for himself. Dr. Horace Bushnell voiced the experiences of many of us when he said, "My experience is

that the Bible is dull when I am dull. When I am really alive, and set in upon the text with a tidal pressure of living affinities, it opens, it multiplies discoveries and reveals depths even faster than I can note them. The worldly spirit shuts the Bible; the Spirit of God makes it a fire, flaming out all meanings and glorious truths."

The most growing Christian never out-grows his Bible; in that exhaustless jewel-mine every stroke of the mattock reveals new nuggets of gold and fresh diamonds.

Even as a mental discipline there is no book like God's book. Nothing else so sinews up the intellect, so clarifies the perception, so enlarges the views, so purifies the taste, so quickens the imagination, strengthens the understanding, and educates the whole man. The humblest day laborer who saturates his mind with this

celestial schoolbook becomes a superior man to his comrades—not merely a purer man, but a clearer-headed man. It was the feeding on this honey dropping from heaven which gave to the Puritans their wonderful sagacity as well as their unconquerable loyalty to the right. The secret of the superiority of the old-fashioned Scottish peasantry was found in that "big ha' Bible" which Burns described as the daily companion at every ingleside. Simply as an educator the Scriptures ought to be read in every schoolhouse, and there ought to be a chair of Bible instruction in every college. As the honey strewed the forests for Jonathan and his soldiers to feed upon, so the loving Lord has sent down his Word for all hungering humanity, high or humble; as the sunlight was made for all eyes, this book was made for all hearts.

It is more than light; for it is an enlightener. Not only does it reveal the grandest, sublimest and most practical truths, but it improves and enlarges the vision. It makes the blind to see, and the strong sight all the stronger. Who of us that have been sorely perplexed about questions of right and wrong, and puzzled as to our duty, have not caught new views and true views as soon as we dipped our rod into this honeycomb? Once when I was sadly perplexed about the question of changing my field of labor—which would have changed the whole current of my life—a single text of Scripture instantly decided me: and I never repented the decision. Poor Cowper, harassed and tormented, found in the twenty-fifth verse of the third chapter of Romans the honey which brought light to his overclouded soul. John Wesley made

the most signal discovery of his life when he thrust his rod into this verse: "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Even Paul had not learned his own sinfulness until "the commandment came" and opened his eyes. It is this heart-revealing power of the Book that makes it so invaluable in pulpit and inquiry-room.

Ah, there is many a one among my readers who can testify how the precious honey from heaven brought light and joy to his eyes when dimmed with sorrow. The exceeding rich and infallible promises were not only sweet, they were illuminating. They lighted up the valley of the shadow of death; they showed how crosses can be turned into crowns, and how losses can brighten into glorious gains. When I am in a sick room I almost always dip

my rod into the honeycomb of the fourteenth chapter of John. It brings the Master there with his words of infinite comfort. One of my noblest Sunday-school teachers so fed on this divine honey that on her dying bed she said, "My path through the valley is long, but 't is bright all the way."

Nothing opens the sinner's eyes to see himself and to see the Saviour of sinners like the simple Word. The Bible is a book to reveal iniquity in the secret parts. If a young man will dip his rod into this warning, "Look not upon the wine when it is red," he may discover that there is a nest of adders in the glass! If the skeptic and the scoffer can be induced to taste some of that honey which Christ gave to Nicodemus he may find hell a tremendous reality to be shunned, and heaven a glorious reality to be gained.

Brethren in the ministry, I am confident that our chief business is not only to eat hugely of this divine enlightening honey, but to tell people where to dip their rods. A distinguished theological professor said to me, "If I should return to the pastoral charge of a church I should do two things: I would make more direct personal efforts for the conversion of souls, and I would spend no time on the rhetoric of my sermons: I would saturate my mind with Bible truth, and then deliver that truth in the simplest idiomatic English that I could command."

The honey from heaven lies abundant on the ground. May God help us to show it to the hungry, the needy and the perishing!

17. THE RIGHT KIND OF SUBMISSION.

OUR divine Master once said, " Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The best trait of the best child is implicit obedience to parental authority. And the clearest test of conversion is implicit obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. The trouble with us is that we so often pick and choose just what we will obey, and how much we will obey, and whom we will obey. All the most striking cases of obedience mentioned in the Bible—Abraham laying his son on the altar, Daniel braving the king's lions, Naaman going straight to the Jordan, the leper hastening to the priest and being healed as he went,

the paralytic stretching out his withered arm—all these have the quality of promptness to do just as they were directed. Issues and results are left with God. The negro preacher hit the idea exactly in that oft-quoted assertion, “If God tells me to jump troo dat stone wall I’m going to jump at it. Goin’ troo it belongs to God ; jumpin’ at it belongs to me.” That was the grotesque way of putting the same sublime truth as is conveyed in the command, “ Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward!” To march into the Red Sea belonged to Moses ; to divide the Red Sea and make a dry pathway for his people was God’s prerogative.

If there be any one beautiful trait in healthy-hearted childhood it is the trait of cheerful submission to the will of father and mother. Submission to the clearly ascertained will of God, whatever it may

cost us, or however it may cross us, is one of the most genuine evidences of true conversion. I doubt if there be any higher attainment in the Christian life than for any of us to be able to say honestly, "I pray God that I may never find my own will again as long as I live." Let us understand, however, just what kind of submission we are to practise. We are bound to submit to God's distinct orderings, and to such trials as he lays upon us for our spiritual discipline. Dr. Payson of Portland wisely said that "no man is fit to rise up from a bed of suffering and labor again for Christ until he is made willing to lie still and suffer as long as his Master pleases."

But there are obstacles often found in our pathway that are just to test our faith, our courage, and our loyalty to the right. Many a Hill Difficulty is encountered on

our road to heaven, to sinew our strength by the tough climb. Apollyon is allowed sometimes to stride right across our path with the defiant threat, "Thou shalt go no farther, and here will I spill thy soul!" He is a puny Christian who has no such set-to's with the devil. Our Heavenly Father puts some things in our way as prohibitions; and we do ourselves deadly harm if we try to remove them or get around them. Other things are placed there to test our spiritual force and our loyalty; the only right course is for us to lay hold of them and hurl them out of our way. When the youthful David discovered the lion and the bear attacking his flocks he did not say, "Providence sent these animals, and I must submit to them." If there were any providence in it the object might rather be to develop his grit. Pastors often submit tamely to conditions in their

church that ought to be dealt with as the young shepherd dealt with those beasts of prey. Good people in every community submit to intolerable evils, nuisances, and public curses until some heroic leader fairly shames them into revolt.

In this whole great matter of submission to the will of God it is exceedingly important to discriminate wisely. God may sometimes seem to turn a deaf ear to our prayers. His silence or failure to answer should teach us "to pray and not to faint." That earnest woman on the coast of Canaan would have made an awful mistake if she had given over her praying simply because Christ kept her for a while at arm's length. Her persistence carried the day—as the Master meant that it should. God often says "no" to little faith and lazy hands: he loves to say "yes" to sturdy faith and hard work. Sometimes my

Heavenly Father lays heavy afflictions on me and tells me all the while, "whom I love I chasten." Then let me submit. At other times he lays, or permits to be laid, great obstacles in my path, and then the voice to me is, "If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed this mountain shall be removed. My grace is sufficient for thee." The line of correct distinction between the two opposite errors seems to be just about in this fashion: a sinner submits to unrighteous demands; the true Christian never does. The sinner refuses to submit to God's just and holy demands, and to his orderings in providence; the childlike Christian submits without a murmur: "Not as I will, Father, but as thou wilt." God's wise government is the solidest ground of my confidence and joy; it is the rock-bed that underlies all my theology. To fight against God means—hell!

To obey God and sweetly submit to him
is the prelude of heaven.

The late Dr. Thomas H. Skinner was one of the godliest men I ever knew. When a circle of eminent ministers met at his house one Saturday evening he requested them to join in singing Schmolke's beautiful hymn:

“ My Jesus, as thou wilt !
Oh, may thy will be mine ;
Into thy hand of love
I would my all resign.
Straight to my home above
I travel calmly on,
And sing, in life or death,
My Lord, thy will be done ! ”

On the next Saturday evening that same circle of brethren joined in paying loving tribute to his memory ! The noble veteran had yielded up every wish to his Lord and Redeemer, and was sweetly surprised into heaven.

*18. SUGAR IN THE TEA ; OR, THE CHRISTIAN'S
ASSURANCE.*

WHEN a young convert was asked the question, "How do you know Jesus Christ has accepted and forgiven you, and that you are a Christian?" the answer was, "How do you know when you have got sugar in your tea?" This was a sufficient answer; the forgiven soul had felt the change which conversion brings, and had tasted the love of Jesus. It was a positive experience; he knew whom he had believed.

Some good people who are troubled with a desponding temperament worry themselves about this matter of assurance. To such we would say—do n't vex your soul about assurance; prac-

tice the faith of adherence. Cleave fast to Jesus Christ. Fasten your weakness to his omnipotence; in your ignorance seek his guidance; when he says, "My blood cleanseth from sin," believe him; and when conscience bids you do anything to please Christ, do it. That Saviour who died for you asks you to trust him and to follow him; and that is all that he demands of you. Are you sincerely, honestly doing that? Then listen to what that loving Saviour says to you: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Christ never declared that if you or I in a fit of self-confidence or waywardness threw ourselves out of that loving hand we would be safe; we are only safe while we remain there.

All that is required of you is adherence and obedience. You have got to put the sugar into your tea if you want to taste its sweetness.

Repentance unto life is a turning away from your sins unto God with a full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience. Are you doing that? Saving faith is the heart's cling to Jesus Christ and him only. If you are doing that it ought to give you a cheerful, delightful sense of security. "Faith is the milk," Spurgeon used to say, "and assurance is the cream that rises on it." If your milk is nearly all water you cannot expect much cream. The stronger your faith of adherence the more peace of mind and spiritual joy you will have. The Bible does not declare that assurance is essential to salvation; but it does declare that faith and obedience to Jesus Christ are essential. I do n't

doubt that a great many people will get into heaven who had rather a feeble faith and still less joy in this world. Their feet were not "like hinds' feet;" they hobbled along on crutches. That was not Christ's fault; it was their own fault.

Poor Peter had rather a feeble faith when he screamed to his Master out of the waves, "Lord, save me!" he had received from the Holy Spirit a great baptism and attained a mighty faith when his trenchant sermon at Pentecost brought in thousands of converts. Saul of Tarsus had an infant faith in his soul when he was groping about in the house of Ananias at Damascus; the infant had grown into a giant when Paul could shout, in the eighth chapter of Romans, "Neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

We have just said that assurance is not a positive essential to salvation ; but it is essential to our peace and comfort. It is the duty of every Christian to seek for it ; the more sugar we put into the draught the sweeter will it be to our taste. Old heroic Latimer used to say that when he had a strong steadfast trust in his Master he could face a lion ; when he lost it he was ready to run into a mouse-hole. If you and I have put our entire trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation, and are striving every day to do his will and to bless our fellow-men with our religion, then he is responsible for the trust. Why should we worry ?

When I built this house I got a deed for the land and recorded it. I don't run down to the registry office every week to see that the title is good. If we have taken Jesus Christ at his word, and com-

mitted our souls to his keeping and our lives to his ordering and our powers to his service, let us not worry about our title-deeds to heaven. Go about your life work, brother, and do it thoroughly and conscientiously. God is responsible for the results, sooner or later, and for your final reward. The shepherd knoweth his flock, and calleth them all by name. To you his voice is "Only believe," "Follow me!" If your cup of trial is sometimes bitter, put in more of the sugar of faith. If you feel chilled by the disappointment of your plans or the unkindness of others, get into the sunshine of Christ's love. If income runs down, invest more in God's precious promises. A good, stout, healthy faith will sweeten your affections, and sweeten your toils, and sweeten your home, and sweeten the darkest hours that may lie between this

and heaven. Adherence will bring assurance.

“ If our love were but more simple
We would take him at his word,
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.”

19. GOD NEVER DISAPPOINTS US.

WE cannot trust ourselves too little, and we cannot trust God too much. "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding." Somewhere in the future there hangs before us in the air a golden ideal of a perfect life, but as we move on the dream of complete victory over sin moves on also before us. It is like the child running over the hill to catch the rainbow; when he gets over the hill the rainbow is as far off as ever. If our expectation of spiritual growth and of conquest of temptation rests on our own resolutions and on our own strength, then our day-dreams are continually doomed to disappointment.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." God never disappoints us. When we study the Almighty in the book of nature or the book of revelation we find our utmost expectation overtopped by the wonderful reality. When we obey God we find the rich reward sooner or later just as surely as day follows the sunrise. When we trust God he never fails us. When we pray to him aright, with faith, with submissiveness, with perseverance, and with honest desire to glorify him, he answers us. I do n't believe our Heavenly Father ever turned a deaf ear to an honest prayer offered in the right spirit. He is a Sovereign, and doeth his own wise will; and if it pleaseth him to keep us waiting for the answer, then we must understand that delays are not always denials.

If we had only to demand from God

just what we desire, and in the way and the time that suits our pleasure, then we would be snatching God's sceptre and trying to rule the Ruler of the universe. Did you ever know a child that ruled its parents without ruining itself? And if it spoils our children to have their own way I am sure that it would be for our ruin if we could bend God to all our wishes. If this be our "expectation" from God, then the sooner we abandon it the better. God keeps all his promises, but he has never promised to let you and me hold the reins. He answers prayer, but in the way and at the time that his infinite wisdom determines. Some prayers are not answered at once; more than one faithful mother has gone to her grave before the child for whose conversion she prayed has given his heart to Jesus. Some prayers are answered in a way so unlooked for that the

answer is not recognized; eternity will "make it plain." For many petitions are answered according to the intention and not according to the strict letter of the request; the blessing granted has been something different from what the believer expected. Jacob, when he blessed the sons of Joseph, laid his right hand on the son who stood at his left side. So God sometimes takes off his hand of blessing from the thing we prayed for and lays it on another which is more for our good and his own glory. He often surprises his people with unexpected blessings—and heaven will have abundance of such surprises.

Let us rejoice to remember that our Saviour is God, and in him dwelleth all fulness. "Of his fulness have we all received," said the Beloved Disciple, and John was not disappointed. Neither was

Paul when he found himself “filled with might in the inner man.” There is a fulness of grace and love and power and peace and comfort that his redeemed children have never been able to explore, much less to exhaust. I left some little brooks, nearly run dry, the other day, up in the mountains, but I found yonder harbor, fed from the fathomless Atlantic, as full as ever. “Oh, how shallow a soul I have to take in Christ’s love,” said the holy Rutherford; “I have spilled more of his grace than I have brought with me. How little of the sea can a child carry in his hand ; as little am I able to take away of my great Sea, my boundless and running over Christ Jesus !”

When a friend of mine, long years ago, urged John Jacob Astor to subscribe for a certain object, and told him that his son had subscribed, the old German millionaire

replied very dryly, “ He can do it; he has got a rich father.” Brother Christian, you and I have got a rich Father! We are heirs to a great inheritance and possessors of exceeding precious promises. Let us ask for great things. God must take it ill that we covet so little of the best things and pray with such scrimped and scanty faith. “ Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.” We can easily over-expect from our fellow-creatures, but we cannot over-expect God. “ The Lord taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy.” I have read many a biography which ended in bright hopes quenched in blackness of darkness, but I never have read, and never have I heard of the experience, of any man who confessed that he was disappointed in his Lord and Saviour.

“ My soul, wait thou only upon God : for my expectation is from him.” There

can be no divided responsibility ; it is God or nobody. As the old Puritan writer Trapp reminds us, "They trust not God at all who trust him not entirely ; he that stands with one foot on a rock and another foot on a quicksand will sink as surely as he that hath both feet on a quicksand." The stake is indescribably tremendous, for it involves my eternal destiny. Even heaven is as yet only an "expectation," but it is from him !

" My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness ;
On Christ the solid rock I stand ;
All other ground is sinking sand."

20. FRUITFUL CHRISTIANS.

AUTUMN is the season of fruit harvests, when the orchards have “paid their dividends,” and the music of ripe apples is heard as they go rattling into their bins. The wormy and the worthless fruit has been thrown to the swine; only the sound fruit is accounted fit for the cellar or the market. Every Christian church is an orchard, and every tree in that orchard is “known by its fruits.” Too many there are who try to pass for Christians; but from them the yield of genuine graces can no more be expected than the owner of a grove of scrub oaks would expect a crop of Bartlett pears. The fruits of the Holy Spirit—as the apostle catalogues them—

are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

The first essential to a fruitful Christian is that he be well rooted. No part of a tree is so invisible and yet so important as its roots. The condition of a tree commonly reports where its roots are and what they are doing. A dearth of life below ground means barrenness above ground. The roots of our religious life are our secret motives and our ruling affections; and no one can claim to be a genuine Christian unless Jesus Christ dwelleth down in the core of his heart. When we are shocked to discover the loose living and spiritual barrenness of some church members it is because the branches of their profession hang over on the church side of the wall while their roots are in the sandy soil of worldliness on the other side. There is no heart-union to

Christ; and he has declared, “ Except ye abide in me ye can bear no fruit.”

A godly life is not the result of a divine decree without any free agency on our part, much less is it a matter of happy accident. Grapes do not grow on thorn bushes, nor are figs gathered from thistles. Multitudes of people expect at some day to become Christians, and often wish that they were Christians, and yet they do not apply the common-sense principle of causes and results. To be a Christian signifies that one has the divine “root of the matter” in him—that he has a character which grows out of faith in the crucified Christ and proves itself genuine by obedience to Christ’s commandments. Such a character is not a matter of divine decree, or of human haphazard, any more than wheat grows without planting, or that Hamburg grapevines spring up spontane-

ously in our gardens. Christian character is a growth—first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full, ripe corn in the ear. There can be no vigorous growth without a deep rooting into Jesus Christ; and shallow conversions produce shallow Christians.

Some Christians are bountiful fruit-bearers, and the reason is that they draw all their supplies of grace and all their inspiration of daily conduct from their deep-down heart-union to Jesus. Love of Jesus is the motive that subdues selfishness; and loyalty to Jesus holds them as a stout root holds a tree amid the blasts of winter's tempests, or under the summer's parching droughts. Glorious old Paul was always abounding in the work of the Lord, and he tells the secret of it when he said, "Christ liveth in me." A drought never affects a well-rooted Christian whose soul is in con-

stant connection with the fountain-head of all spiritual power

There is too much periodical piety in our churches. Some brethren are only flourishing during seasons of "revival." The rest of the time they have a very dingy look; their leaves get so powdered over with the dust of worldliness that they are very unsightly objects. There are some others whose leaf turns yellow very soon after they are planted in the church: this betrays a lack of moisture at the root, or perhaps a secret worm of indulged sin that is devouring the life of the tree. It is a wretched mistake to deal with the externals before the world while the condition of the heart is neglected. If the heart is rooted by the "rivers of water" the leaf will be always green and the fruit abundant. Such a disciple never ceases to yield fruit. Every year is a bearing year. It is

the fixed habit of this faithful brother to attend the place of prayer in all weathers, to give according to his means, to pay every one his dues, to share his loaf with the suffering, to give his vote as conscience demands, and to stand up for Jesus Christ everywhere and on all occasions. He is always abounding in the work of the Master.

This is the sort of Christian who glorifies his Father in heaven by "bearing much fruit." The word "much" here is comparative. What would be much for a washerwoman would be paltry for a millionaire. A certain city church may plume itself on contributing fifty thousand dollars a year to foreign missions; but who in that church pinches himself or herself to do it? We could match against those dwellers in freestone and marble a poor widow who at the end of a day of

drudgery puts on a dress that has been turned three times and trudges two miles on foot to her prayer-meeting, saving her car-fare for the missionary box; verily her gift outshines them all. The Master weighs gifts and labor in the scale of self-denial. Barnabas heads the column in the apostolic church; he gives his real estate to the Lord, he goes a city missionary to Antioch and a foreign missionary to Cyprus, and wins the lofty title, "full of the Holy Spirit."

"Much fruit" means the giving to Christ the best we have. It is the lading of every limb on life's tree—be it a giant or a dwarf. He who in the lowliest sphere walks according to the Scripture rule, employs his time and single talent, controls his words, regulates his conduct and does his work in such a conscientious way as to make his religion legible and luminous to all around

him—such a man is a bountiful fruit-bearer. In the Isle of Wight dwelt a poor “Dairyman’s Daughter” and a “Little Jane, the Young Cottager,” whose precious clusters of choice grapes of grace have sent out a sweet fragrance over Christendom. They “did what they could.” Luther, the prince of reformers, Wesley, the prince of church organizers, Livingstone, the prince of missionaries, Shaftesbury, the prince of modern philanthropists, shook down their fruits over many lands; yet in God’s sight they won no higher honor than the two cottage maidens. One of the most magnificent bearers, who “yielded fruit every month” for forty years, was transplanted last winter from the soil of Boston to the soil of heaven. Adoniram Judson Gordon’s power for Christ, instead of being terminated by his earthly life, increases every day; his goodly branches like the

cedar's extend to the rivers ; he is teaching to the churches the " Ministry of the Spirit " as no man in our day has taught that sovereign truth ; grateful souls will be gathering his ripe fruits, delicious to the taste, when the millennial glory breaks !

Living to Jesus Christ every day and in the minutest things of life is the secret of fruitfulness. A fruitful Christian is a growth—not a sudden creation. A noble Christly character cannot be finished up by a religion of Sundays and sacraments and special services ; it is the product of many days of sunshine and storm, of drawing in the vital sap from Jesus as the living Head, of conflict and prayer and self-denials, and downpourings of the Holy Spirit. The religion that would rather be poor than touch a dishonest dollar, that would rather go through a Sunday's fierce storm to its mission school than lie on its

lounge ; a religion that in all things serves Christ for the sheer love of serving him—this is the kind of spiritual growth whose fruits taste of the divine life within it. Blessed is that Christian whose broad boughs are laden with “apples of gold” for God’s “baskets of silver”! Such blessedness is within the reach of every one who reads this book ; as you lay it down, ask yourself, “Am I bearing the genuine fruits of the Holy Spirit?”

21. A LITTLE WHILE.

IN our Lord's last conversation with his disciples before his betrayal and crucifixion he said to them, "A little while and ye shall not see me; and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go unto the Father." Before them was the bloody tragedy on Calvary, and forty days after that his ascension through the vernal air to heaven. They would see him no more in earthly form. But in another little while—in fifty days thereafter—he would come again by his Holy Spirit in the wondrous baptism of power at Pentecost. He was then to be glorified by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his disciples. Jesus Christ is with his people

now; for did he not promise, “ Lo, I am with you alway ”?

Those sweet tender words, “a little while,” have deep thoughts in them, like the still ocean at the twilight—thoughts too deep for our fathoming. They breathe some precious consolations to those whose burdens are heavy, either of care, or poverty, or sickness. If the prosperous can enjoy their prosperity only for a little while neither shall the mourner weep much longer, or God’s poor children carry much longer the pains or privations of poverty. The daily toil to earn the daily bread, the carking care to keep the barrel from running low and the scanty “cruse” from wasting, will soon be over. Cheer up, my brother! “ A little while and ye shall see me,” says your blessed Master, “ for I go to prepare a place for you.” Oh the infinite sweep of the glorious transition! A

few years here in a lowly dwelling, whose rent it is hard to pay, and then infinite ages in the palace of the King of kings. Here a scanty table and coarse raiment soon outworn; yonder a robe of resplendent light at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Let this blissful thought put new courage into thy soul, and fresh sunshine into thy countenance.

I sometimes go into a sick chamber where the “prisoners of Jesus Christ” are suffering with no prospect of recovery. Perhaps the eyes of some of those chronic invalids may fall upon this article. My dear friends, put under your pillows these sweet words of Jesus—“a little while.” It is only for a little while that you are to serve your Master by patient submission to his holy will. That chronic suffering will soon be over. That disease which no earthly physician can cure

will soon be cured by your Divine Physician, who by the touch of his messenger will cure you, in an instant, into the perfect health of heaven! You will exchange this weary bed of pain for that crystal air in which none shall say, "I am sick;" neither shall there be any more pain.

Not only to the sick and to the poverty-stricken child of God do these tender words of our Redeemer bring solace. Let these words, "a little while," bring a healing balm to hearts that are smarting under unkindness, or wounded by neglect, or pining under privations, or bleeding under sharp bereavements. I offer them as a sedative to sorrows and a solace under sharp afflictions. "A little while and ye shall see me," and the sight of him shall wipe out all the memories of the darkest hours through which you made your way into the everlasting rest.

“A few more struggles here,
A few more conflicts o’er,
A little while of toils and tears,
And we shall weep no more.”

These words of the Master are also a trumpet-call to duty. In a little while my post in the pulpit shall be empty; what manner of minister ought I to be in fidelity to dying souls? Sabbath-school teacher, in a little while you shall meet the young immortals in your class for the last time. Are you winning them to Christ? The time is short. Whatever your hands find to do for the Master, do it. Do it, Aquila and Priscilla, in the Sunday-school! Do it, Lydia, in the home! Do it, Dorcas, with thy needle, and Mary in the room of sickness and sorrow! Do it, Tertius, with thy pen and, Apollos, with thy tongue! Do it, praying Hannah, with thy children, and make for them the

“little coat” of Christian character which they shall wear when you have gone home to a mother’s heavenly reward.

Only think, too, how much may be achieved in a little while. The atonement for a world of perishing sinners was accomplished between the sixth hour and the ninth hour on darkened Calvary. That flash of divine electricity from the Holy Spirit which struck Saul of Tarsus to the ground was the work of an instant, but the great electric burner of the converted Paul has blazed over all the world for centuries. A half-hour’s faithful preaching of Jesus by a poor itinerant Methodist exhorter at Colchester brought the boy Spurgeon to a decision, and launched the mightiest ministry of modern times. Lady Henry Somerset tells us that a few minutes of solemn reflection in her garden decided her to exchange a life of

fashionable frivolity for a life of consecrated philanthropy. Why cite any more cases, when every Christian can testify that the best decisions and deeds of his or her life turned on the pivot of a few minutes? In the United States Mint they coin eagles out of the sweepings of gold dust from the floor. Brethren, we ought to be misers of our minutes! If on a dying bed they are so precious, why not in the fuller days of our healthful energies? Said General Mitchell, the great astronomer, to an officer who apologized for being only a few minutes behind time, "Sir, I have been in the habit of calculating the tenth part of a second!"

Our whole eternity will hinge on the "little while" of probation here. Only an inch of time to choose between an eternity of glory or the endless woes of hell! And as a convert exclaimed in a prayer-

meeting, "it was only a moment's work with me when I was in earnest." May God help us all to be faithful—only for a little while; and then comes the unfading crown :

"A little while for patient vigil-keeping
To face the stern—to wrestle with the strong,
A little while to sow the seed with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves and sing the harvest-song.

"A little while to keep the oil from failing,
A little while faith's flickering lamp to trim,
And then, the Bridegroom's coming footsteps hailing,
We'll haste to meet him with the bridal hymn."

22. *READY!*

“WHEN Death calls the roll, always be ready to answer ‘Here!’” This familiar motto of Fenimore Cooper’s old Trapper of the prairie is a backwoodsman’s paraphrase of the Scripture injunction, “Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh!” Everybody admits that his or her name will soon be called. Everybody admits the uncertainty of life and the absolute certainty of death. Some of those who read this paragraph may be within a few weeks or days of the eternal world; the invisible cistern may be nearly run out, and only a few drops left. Suppose this were your case, my friend; would you be frightened? You ought not

to be if you are ready to go ; and if you are not, then it is of infinite moment to you that you should be “ setting your house in order.” Suppose that you ask yourself two or three questions, that you may know whether you are ready for the approaching roll-call.

1. Are your business affairs in the right condition to be left ? Are your accounts square, and your books so kept that you would be willing to have them audited, not only by your executors, but by the All-seeing Eye ? It is hardly possible that you should not be owing a single dollar to anybody. But every man should conscientiously endeavor to keep his affairs so well ordered that, if a stroke of lightning or an apoplectic attack should end his life in an instant, his creditors should not suffer the unjust loss of a dime. Death is a merciless revealer sometimes ; he makes awful

exposure of some men's secret dishonesty and of others' criminal carelessness and improvidence. Would a single creditor suffer if you were to die to-morrow? For remember that it is just as dishonest to cheat your fellow-men from your coffin as to cheat them in your store, your shop or your office. No Christian, surely, would wish to escape his creditor or to "take the benefit of the act" by hiding away in his sepulchre; and it will be a terrible thing to have some poor wronged fellow-creature carry up an unsettled account to the last tribunal. See to it, then, that you can go into another world without leaving a single person in this world to charge you with wronging him out of a farthing. For death is not the last of it; settling-day comes in the next world.

2. No person who has any others dependent on him is ready to die unless he

has made proper provision for them. Some people are afraid to make a will lest death should overhear the scratch of their pens and be on their track. This is worse than cowardice ; it is often a most shameful injustice to surviving kindred. Not only should every conscientious man make a will, but the first provision in it should be for those who have the strongest moral claim. Healthy, prosperous, well-educated children have not a claim so strong as infirm parents have, or poor invalid relatives, or some benefactor who has never had his due. When you have discharged all the honest claims of those who are dependent, then make your Lord and Saviour your residuary legatee. Put your money where it will do the most good after you are gone ; for stewardship reaches beyond the surrogate's office : it goes up to the day of judgment. It is a blessed privilege to be

scattering Bibles, or building asylums, or supporting missionaries, or educating poor freedmen, after you have reached heaven. Frederick Marquand went up to his rest years ago, but he built a noble edifice for the young men of Brooklyn, another for Mr. Moody's Christian school among the hills of Massachusetts, and other similar structures elsewhere. Give the Lord all you can while you live; and then make such a will as you will not be ashamed to show him when you come into his presence.

3. A third close question for you to ask is—Am I forgiven? Not merely by any fellow-creature whom you may have injured or wounded. See to that, of course; see to it that no injuries unredressed and no harsh words unrepaired and no bitter memories be laid in your coffin; let no nettles grow in the turf above your ashes.

But the more vital question is, Have your sins been forgiven? All those evil thoughts towards God, all those secret sins that nobody has ever seen or dreamed of, all those transgressions of God's pure law, all your lost opportunities to do good, all your woundings of Christ's love and grievings of his Holy Spirit, have all these been pardoned? If not, they will condemn your soul and blast your hopes in eternity. Have you gone to Christ for forgiveness? "Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Have you made honest confession and implored pardon in Jesus' name? Have you clinched the sincerity of your confession by abandoning the sins you have loved, and set about a life of obedience to Christ's commandments? No repentance is of any avail that does not lead to Christ. When you get rid of the old heart, by having a

new and a clean heart—when you begin a new life in Christ and for Christ, then you are ready either to stay in this world or to go away into a better. “Blessed is the man whose transgressions are covered.” There is no condemnation in this world or in the next world to the man who is in Christ Jesus.

Other questions might be started. But if you are sure on these points that have just been named, if you can give an honest “yes” to the questions already stated, then you need not be afraid to hear your name called. You need not be ashamed to present yourself at the door of your Father’s House. That door will open to give you “an abundant entrance.”

23. *CHEERFUL THOUGHTS ABOUT GOING HOME.*

THERE is one thing that we have all got to do one of these days, and that is to die. It is well, as rare old Jeremy Taylor phrased it, to go "knock at the gate of our grave" occasionally, and to listen whether any painful echo comes back from within. When I am visiting my beautiful plot in peerless "Greenwood" I often forecast the inevitable hour when my earthly vesture shall be laid down beside those of my beloved children in our family bed-room—"asleep in Jesus." I look off to a neighboring hill and see the monument of Prof. Morse, and then towards another hillock which bears the tomb of the benevolent millionaire, John

C. Green, and then over at Oak Knoll, on which my old friend Horace Greeley rests after his busy life, and then away to still another elevation on whose verdant slope slumbers the eloquent Dr. George W. Bethune, who wrote,

“It is not death to die—
To leave this weary road,
And ’mid the brotherhood on high
To be at home with God.”

This is the right way for a redeemed child of Christ to think and to speak about dying. A great many good people are plagued and tormented with a vague horror about their last hours; they have heard about the “pangs of death” and “death-bed agonies,” and really die a thousand deaths themselves by frightened anticipation. Now it may relieve some of these excellent folk to be reminded that in the vast majority of cases there is but little

physical suffering in the last moments. To a genuine Christian few things in life are less painful than life's close. If our souls are at peace we need not trouble ourselves about bodily sufferings—for commonly fatal disease has a certain benumbing effect upon the nerves, so that the dying suffer very little. Such has been my observation. "I had not thought," said a certain good man, "that it could be so easy a thing to die." As life ebbs away usually sensibility to pain goes with it. So gently did a certain eminent chemist breathe his last that a teaspoon of milk which he held in his hand was not even upset; the dead hand held it still.

Death is very often a slow fading out of the faculties, like the coming on of a tranquil twilight. The sense of hearing sometimes remains intensely acute, so that the dying overhear a whisper in the room.

"She is sinking very fast," was whispered by an attendant in the dying-chamber of a godly woman. "No, no," was the quick response of her who had overheard the words; "no, I am not sinking; I am in the arms of my Saviour." The sense of sight generally weakens in the process of dying. A medical friend of mine said to his wife, "Set that lamp up closer to me; the room seems to be growing dark." Such were the sensations of Dr. Adam, the learned principal of the Edinburgh High School, who fancied himself to be in his school-room, and murmured gently, "Boys, it is getting dark; you may go home."

Of deaths on the battlefield a large proportion must be without severe physical agony; for a gunshot wound is apt to benumb the sensibilities. When a bullet pierces either the heart or the brain there can be no pain; probably our glorious mar-

tyr Abraham Lincoln "never knew what hurt him." Drowning is far from painful. Those who have been resuscitated tell us that their sensations were rather exhilarating. Somewhat similar are the feelings of those who have been benumbed with cold in the Arctic regions; they imagined themselves to be sinking into a sweet slumber. But the recovery, the thawing out, was an excruciating agony. It is about the same with backsliders in our churches: they find it very easy to drop off into spiritual torpor, but when God in mercy wakes them up, and brings them to by severe chastisements, the process of soul-conviction and contrition involves sharp sufferings. Blessed be the blow that awakens a freezing Christian!

I have witnessed a few jubilant and triumphant dying-beds, but ecstatic raptures are rare. Calm, sweet tranquillity is often-

er the attitude of the child of God who is waiting for the messenger to bear him home. On the other hand, I have but seldom witnessed poignant distress on the part of those who had given no evidence of preparation to meet God. To all such, however quiet may be their exit, the terrible pang must come afterwards. The real “sting of death” is not bodily pain, or separation from loved ones, or momentary remorse; it is a wasted life, a rejected Saviour, and a lost soul! The full consciousness and the consequences of these are realized in the next world.

It is not wise nor well for a genuine, active and healthy Christian to be thinking too often about dying. To do every day a full, brave day’s work is the main thing. Don’t let us look too far ahead; the blessed wages will be sure when sun-down comes. Our loving Father keeps

our times in his own hand ; he knows when to dismiss us from the life-school and promote us to the higher grade in heaven. It is a luxury to live a full, hearty, vigorous life for Jesus, sowing and reaping, filling and being filled. As soon as God has something better for us to do, and something richer for us to enjoy, and something higher for us to reach, let us joyfully go up yonder after them.

“ ‘T is a blessing to live, but a greater to die ;
And the best of this world is its path to the sky.’ ”

24. AN EYE ON HEAVEN.

A WISE man who is setting out for a foreign country—especially if he intends to reside there—will study the localities in that land, and seek to become acquainted with the language and the customs of its people. His thoughts will be much upon it. But do the great majority even of true Christians spend much time on thought about heaven? Yet it is to be their dwelling-place through innumerable ages. At no distant day—perhaps within a few days to some of us—the veil that hides the eternal world may drop, and the gates of the Father's house may open before our astonished vision! If heaven is ready for Christ's redeemed people, then

surely they should be making ready for heaven.

We ought to be thinking more about our future and everlasting home. If our treasures are there, then our hearts should be there also in frequent and joyful anticipations. John Bunyan tells us of his Pilgrim that "his heart waxed warm about the place whither he was going." This world is not our rest. It is only our temporary lodging-place, our battle-ground to fight sin and Satan, our vineyard in which to labor for our Master and our fellow-men until sundown, our training-school for the development of character and growth in grace. A thoroughly spiritual person, who makes Jesus Christ real and the powers of the world to come real, and who has set his affections on things above, must inevitably have some deep meditations about his home and his magnificent

inheritance. He loves to read about it, and gathers up eagerly the few grand, striking things which his Bible tells him about the jasper walls, and the gates of pearl, and the trees that bear twelve manner of fruits, and the crystal streams that flow flashing from beneath the throne of God. Among his favorite hymns are "Jerusalem the Golden" and the "Shining Shore"; they are like rehearsals for his part by-and-by in the sublime oratorios of heaven. Sometimes, when cares press heavily, or bodily pains wax sharp, or bereavements darken his house, he gets homesick, and he says, "Oh that I had wings, like a dove; then would I fly away and be at rest!"

Such devout meditations do not prove any man or woman to be a dreamy mystic. They are not the pious sentimentalizings of mourners to whom this world has lost

all its charm, or of enthusiasts whose religion evaporates in mere emotion. The hundred-handed Paul constantly reminds his fellow-workers that their "citizenship is in heaven." The godly Samuel Rutherford, who was said to be always studying, always preaching, and always visiting the sick, found time to feed on anticipations of Paradise. He tells us that he often longed to "stand at the outer side of the gates of the New Jerusalem and look through a crevice of the door and see Christ's face." He exclaims, "Oh, time, run fast! Oh, fair day, when wilt thou dawn? Oh, shadows, flee away! Oh, well-beloved Bridegroom, be thou to me like the roe or the young hart on the mountains!" No man in modern times has written any volume so full of heavenly aspirations as Richard Baxter's "*Saint's Everlasting Rest.*" Yet Baxter was one

of the most practical of philanthropists. While meditating on the Better Country he wore his busy life out in striving to make England a better country; and the town of Kidderminster was revolutionized by his ceaseless labors for the bodies and the souls of its inhabitants. Intense spirituality and intense practicality were beautifully united in the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston. If he kept one eye on heaven, he kept the other wide open to see the sins and the snares and the sorrows of his fellow-creatures all around him. I verily believe that if we thought more about heaven, and realized more its ineffable blessedness, we would strive harder to get others there; we would not be content to travel thither on a path only wide enough for one.

It is no wonder that some professed Christians do not catch more distinct

glimpses of the celestial world. Their vision is obscured. As a very small object when held close to the eye will hide even the sun at noonday, so a Christian may hold a dollar so close to the eye of his soul as to shut out both Christ and heaven. Fishes down in the Mammoth Cave become eyeless at last; and so will any of us lose even the faculty of seeing if we shut ourselves in a cavern of grinding worldliness or utter unbelief. Perhaps some reader of this article may despondingly say, "Well, I never get any sight of heaven; I am all in a mist; nothing but clouds and darkness before my eyes." My friend, look where you are standing. You are in Satan's marshy grounds and among the quagmires where the fogs dwell continually. Ever since you left the "King's highway," ever since you forsook the straight path of duty, ever since you

quit honest praying and Christian work, and God's Book for your ledger, and the service of Christ for the service of Mammon, you have strayed away into the devil's territory! Heaven is not visible to backsliders. And never until your feet take hold again of that strait path of sincere, unselfish obedience to Jesus Christ, and your eyes are washed out with some sincere tears of repentance, will you have any fresh, gladdening glimpse of that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Throw off your load, my friend, and the sins that so easily beset you, and, getting your feet again in the track, run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. When you get your eye fixed again on Christ you will no longer complain that heaven is utterly out of sight.

Those whose conversation is in heaven,

and who keep it constantly before them, have abundant sources of spiritual joy. They renew their strength as they push upward and heavenward. What is it to them that the road is long and sometimes the hills of difficulty are steep, that there are often lions in the way, that there are crosses to be carried, that there are some valleys of the death-shadow to be threaded, and that not far ahead is that river over which there is no bridge! All these things do not disturb them. Heaven lieth at the end of the way, clothed in its purple and its golden light. The Mount Zion is there—the city of the living God and the innumerable company of angels, some of whom may turn out to be old friends who have had their eye on us ever since we were born into Christ. From the hilltops we can, with the spy-glass of faith, bring heaven so near that we can see its “bul-

warks with salvation strong" and "its streets of shining gold."

These views of the certain and assuredly promised inheritance of glory ought to quicken our zeal prodigiously. The time is short, and shortening every day. If we are to have treasures there we must be securing them; no time is to be lost. If we are to lead any souls there we must be out after them. If we are to wear any crown there, however humble, we must win it. Christian zeal depends on inward warmth; and much of that heat must come from heaven. "When," exclaimed grand old Baxter, "when, oh my soul, hast thou been warmest? When hast thou most forgot thy wintry sorrows? Is it not when thou hast got above, closest to Jesus Christ, and hast conversed with him, and viewed the mansions of glory, and filled thyself with sweet foretastes, and talked

with the inhabitants of the higher world?" Certain it is that he who loves not Christ and his fellow-men loves not heaven; and he who loves not heaven is not very likely to see heaven. A true life is just a tarrying and a toiling in this earthly tent *for* Christ until we go into the mansions *with* Christ. Fellow-workers, the miles to heaven are few and short; let us be found busy in heart and hand when the summons sounds, "Come up hither!"

THRESCORE AND TEN.

To me the years have gentler grown,
And time more gracious now than then,
Though here I sit and muse alone,
 Threescore and ten.

The best of living is the last,
And life seems sweetest at its close ;
And something richer than the past
 These days disclose.

I mourn not now the silvered hair,
The trembling hand, the failing power,
As here I wait and calmly dare
 The coming hour.

What dreams of honor or of gain,
Of wreaths or crowns to grace my brow,
Once stirred my spirit, none remain
 To stir me now.

The tossing life, the hope and fear,
The strife, the pain of earlier days—
On these, all past, I look with clear
 Unshrinking gaze.

And even when I sorrow most,
Yet happy are the tears I shed,
And bright the memories of the lost :
 The precious dead.

The increase of the corn and wine,
And growing gladness in the heart,
And wondrous grace and joy are mine,
From men apart.

Alone, but not alone, I stand ;
Around, above, a Power divine
Is shining, and a heavenly Hand
Is touching mine.

Strange glories gild my closing day,
And one bright star from out the west
Calls me in tender tones away
From work to rest.

And voices which amid the din
Of outward life I could not hear
Are gently whispering within
Their words of cheer.

So, welcome is each flying year,
And welcome is this silent bliss ;
Nor aught the noisy world can bear
Compares with this.

And so, reclining on the slope
Of life, apart from busy men,
I firmly grasp this larger hope—
Threescore and ten !

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